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NEW STUDIES IN ACTS

By
EDWARD I. BOSWORTH
Dean of Oberlin Theological Seminary

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PREFACE

THESE "New Studies in Acts" replace those published ten years ago in a book called "Studies in the Acts and Epistles." The detailed treatment of the Epistles which constituted so large a part of the earlier book is omitted. A few pages of the treatment of Acts, of the Epistle of James, and some "Personal Thoughts," found in the earlier book reappear here. But with these slight exceptions the book is entirely rewritten. I have used here and there considerable matter which I prepared during the years 1901-3 for a series of Studies in Acts published in the columns of "The Congregationalist and Christian World."

OBERLIN, OHIO, August 1, 1908.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

In his opening sentence the author speaks of an earlier work which he had dedicated to the friend referred to here. The occurrence of the name Theophilus in our third Gospel (Luke 1:1-4) identifies that Gospel as this earlier work. According to the early tradition of the church, as it appears in the period 160-200 A.D., the author's name was Luke. A man named Luke ("Loukas") is mentioned three times in the New Testament among the companions of the great missionary apostle, Paul. It appears from Paul's letter to the Colossians (4:14) that he was a physician. Probably Paul at times availed himself of his professional services. Colossians 4:11 seems to show that Luke was not a Jew. That he did missionary work in addition to the practice of his profession is indicated by Paul's letter to Philemon (v. 24). He was also with Paul in prison during the last months of Paul's life (2 Timothy 4:6, 11).

The occurrence of the pronoun "we" in certain sections of the book of Acts probably shows that Luke was with Paul during the periods covered by these sections. If so, he joined him at a seaport in Asia Minor (16:10), went with him to Philippi in Macedonia (16:17), but no further (17:1). Some years later he rejoined Paul at Philippi (20:6), went with him to Jerusalem (21:17), probably stayed in Palestine for the next two years (24:27), and certainly accompanied Paul on the perilous voyage to Rome (27:1; 28:7, 16). According to one important manuscript Acts 11:28 reads: "As *we* were gathered together one of them, Agabus by name," etc. If this reading is followed, Luke was with Paul in Syrian Antioch.

Luke's connection with Paul and his friends gave him unusual opportunity for gathering information regarding incidents with which he was not himself personally connected. He met men who were familiar with the beginning of the Christian movement in Jerusalem; e. g., Barnabas (11:28, according to the reading cited above); Mnason, an early disciple (21:16); James, the brother of Jesus (21.18); Silas, a Jerusalem man (16:19; 15:22); John Mark, who

was a Jerusalem boy, the son of a prominent woman in the Jerusalem church and well acquainted with Peter (Col. 4:10, 14; Acts 12:11-12). In addition Luke probably spent the two years of Paul's imprisonment in Cæsarea (24:27), making investigations. He would have had opportunity in Cæsarea to consult those who were concerned with the remarkable experience in the Roman captain's parlor described in chapter 10. Philip, the evangelist, in whose home he lodged (21:8) could have given him first-hand information about the work among the Samaritans and his famous ride with the Abyssinian chancellor, described in chapter 8. Paul himself could have given him details about the trial and death of Stephen, for he was himself present at the trial and at the execution (7:58).

The extent to which the author made use of written sources in producing the book of Acts is too technical a question to be discussed here.

PART I

THE MESSIANIC CHURCH IS ESTABLISHED IN JERUSALEM THROUGH THE TESTIMONY OF DISCIPLES OF JESUS EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, IN SPITE OF THE OPPOSITION OF THE JEWISH PRIESTS. 1:1—6:7.

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STUDY IV.—The Movement Is Firmly Established in Jerusalem. 4:32—6:7.

STUDY I.—General Survey of the Book of Acts, and Jesus' Program for the Messianic Movement. 1:1-26

FIRST DAY: THE AUTHOR AND HIS FRIEND. 1:1-2

Read the "Introductory Note on the Author of the Book of Acts." Theophilus is addressed in Luke 1:3 as "most excellent Theophilus." Perhaps he was a gentleman of some rank, for the same adjective is applied to the Roman procurators, Felix and Festus (Acts 23:26; 26:25). At the time when Luke's Gospel was written Theophilus had perhaps just finished a course of instruction preparing him for church membership (Luke 1:4). If so, he is now a full member and perhaps for that reason no longer addressed by the formal title, "most excellent." (ZAHN.)

"All that Jesus began both to do and to teach" (1:1). "We start then from this position. The person of Christ is the explanation of Christianity, its first cause, its perennial inspiration, its imperishable ideal. In Him our religion was first realized, and by Him created."

FAIRBAIRN: *Studies in the Life of Christ.*

Study I.—General Survey of the Book of Acts, and Jesus' Program for the Messianic Movement. 1:1-26

Second Day: The Author's Main Idea

The author's principal purpose is evidently not to give an account of the acts of all the apostles, for he pays little attention to any except Peter and Paul. Neither is it his purpose to give an account of the extension of the church throughout all the world, for he does not follow its growth in all directions from Jerusalem. He simply shows how Christianity ceased to be a Jewish sect and became a world religion. He shows, step by step, how it became evident that God meant foreigners, as well as Jews, to become Christians. The movement begins in Jerusalem, the Jewish capital, and ends in Rome, the world capital. Three things are always in his mind as he traces the development of the Jewish sect into a universal religion: (1) The fact that this new faith was propagated through the testimony of the disciples of Jesus, (2) constantly instigated and endorsed by God, and (3) in spite of the bitter opposition of the Jews. Read Acts 1:8, which forecasts the main trend of the book. Read also the climax of the history as it appears in Acts 28:23-31, noticing the emphasis laid on *testimony, Jewish opposition, Gentile responsiveness,* and the *plan of God.* The author may have had more than one purpose in mind, as will be noted later. His motive is presumably that stated in his preface to his first volume. Luke 1:1-4.

God is steadily present in the life of the world. He is kindling high aspirations in the hearts of responsive men to-day as really as He kindled them in the hearts of Peter and Paul.

Study I.—General Survey of the Book of Acts, and Jesus' Program for the Messianic Movement. 1:1-26

Third Day: The Book in Outline

"The picture is cut up, as it were, into six panels, each labeled with a general summary of progress" (Turner, *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible,* vol. I, p. 421). Note these five seams which divide the book into its six parts, and that in each case progress is summarized: 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20.

Read only the special references given at the end of each paragraph below.

Part I. 1:1—6:7. The Messianic church is established in Jerusalem through the testimony of the disciples of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit, in spite of the opposition of the Jewish priests. Read 1:8; 2:32; 4:1; 5:17; 6:7.

Part II. 6:8—9:31. The witnesses begin to move out from Jerusalem toward foreigners. Read 8:1; 9:15; 9:31.

Part III. 9:32—12:24. The testimony is borne by God's direction for the first time to Jehovah-worshiping foreigners. Read 10:1-5, 44-47; 11:20-21.

Part IV. 12:25—16:5. The testimony is borne for the first time to foreigners that have no connection with the Jewish synagogue. Read 13:2, 46-48; 15:19-21.

Part V. 16:6—19:20. The testimony is carried to Gentiles in the Roman provinces, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia, by Paul and his associates, under the guidance of God and in spite of Jewish opposition. Read 16:10; 17:15; 19:10, 21; 17:5; 18:12.

Part VI. 19:21—28:31. The testimony finally established by Paul under God's direction in Rome, the center of the Gentile world, in spite of fierce Jewish opposition. Read 21:27, 31-33; 23:11; 25:12; 28:16, 30-31.

Christianity is more than a scheme for saving an individual soul. It is a great world movement inspired by Jesus Christ, with which men are called upon to identify themselves unreservedly and with sense of exhilaration.

Study I.—General Survey of the Book of Acts, and Jesus' Program for the Messianic Movement. 1:1-26

Fourth Day: The Revival of a Great Hope. 1:1-5

Read 1:1-5. The dominant idea of Jesus' teaching had been what the Jews commonly called "the Kingdom of God." Jesus had represented it to be a world-civilization in which every man would be a true son of the Heavenly Father and a true brother to his fellow men. The priests and rabbis, the ecclesiastical "machine," had found Jesus interfering with the realization of their ambitions and had consequently killed Him. The death of Jesus had been followed by a "resurrection." His death had been the death of the hope of His disciples, and His resurrection had been its revival. During the six weeks immediately following His resurrection, when He occasionally had interviews with them, He was constantly talking about the Kingdom of God. Read v. 3. He had unabated confidence in the practicability of His vision. At the end of about six weeks He met them in Jerusalem and told them not to leave the city until a certain mysteriously significant event should occur.

Read Acts 1:4-5 and also the author's reference to this event in his first volume, Luke 24:48-49. Some of Jesus' disciples had earlier been disciples of the famous prophet in the wilderness, John the Baptist. John had appealed to all of his countrymen who regarded the New Order, "The Kingdom of God," as imminent, to indicate their penitent aspiration for moral purity by being baptized with water. Such a ceremony had long been customary in the case of foreigners who wished to become Jews, but John asked all of his own countrymen to engage in the ceremony. He spoke of it, however, as something secondary and simply preliminary to a higher experience which the Messiah would afford them when He should appear. Read Luke 3:16. The Messiah would purify not their bodies, but their spirits. John had died without seeing his expectation realized, but Jesus now assures His disciples that the long-expected mysterious event is not far distant.

The undying Spirit of Jesus Christ is irrevocably committed to the establishment of a civilization of brotherly men on the earth. He keeps the idea in the minds of men. After nineteen centuries men are still with confident hope "speaking the things concerning the Kingdom of God."

Study I.—General Survey of the Book of Acts, and Jesus' Program for the Messianic Movement. 1:1-26

Fifth Day: Jesus' Program a Campaign of Testimony. 1:6-11

Read 1:6-9. The disciples of Jesus evidently share the current Jewish conception of the Kingdom of God. In general it was expected that the Kingdom would be a political state, composed of pious Jews living according to the law of Moses, over which the Messiah would reign with Jerusalem as His capital, and subject to which in some indefinite relation would be the other nations of the earth. The disciples inquire whether the promised "baptism with the Holy Spirit," so soon to occur (v. 5), will mark the time when Jesus will make His long-expected Messianic demonstration and inaugurate the New Kingdom. Jesus says the date of the Messianic demonstration is God's secret. Read v. 7. See also Mark 13:32.

The disciples have long had an ambitious dream of "power," wanting to be the chief officials in the new empire. See Mark 9:34; 10:35-37. Jesus, who sees that their minds are still full of this vain dream, says with quiet humor that they will soon receive "power," although not the kind of power they have anticipated, nor to be used for the purposes they have in mind.

Then Jesus lays before them the program of His Messianic movement: Men empowered by the Spirit of God are to start from Jerusalem and make conquest of the world by a campaign of testimony. The civilization of brotherly men can be established if disciples of Jesus in fellowship with the Spirit of their living Lord give report in word and deed of their experience with Jesus. To what were these original disciples to bear witness? To what does a modern disciple bear witness?

Read vv. 9-11. What would Peter have said if some one had asked him how soon he expected Jesus to return and inaugurate His Kingdom?

Have you ever heartily accepted the "program" laid out by Jesus for the movement to which you belong? If the most profound purpose of one's life constitutes his real testimony, what message is unconsciously sounding out from your life?

Study I.—General Survey of the Book of Acts, and Jesus' Program for the Messianic Movement. 1:1-26

Sixth Day: The Witnesses. 1:12-14

Read 1:12-14. This group of men from the northern province occupy a single room where they may unroll their sleeping-rugs at night with less expense than would have been involved in an arrangement securing greater privacy. The composition of the group is interesting. Among them are several business men, including a customs collector and four fish-packers. Read Mark 1:16-20. Two men in the group hold bitterly hostile political opinions, Simon the Zealot and Matthew the Publican. Jesus' four brothers, finally convinced of His Messiahship, are there. Read John 7:5; Mark 6:4 and 3:21, 31. From time to time some of the women whom Luke has mentioned earlier (Luke 8:1-3; 23:49, 55) meet with them; probably also Lazarus and his two sisters, and the two senators mentioned in John 19:38-42; Luke 23:50. Glance at Luke 18:35—19:10 for an account of the capitalist and the beggar who probably frequently journeyed together over the fifteen miles of road between their home and Jerusalem to meet with the group. Perhaps also the ostracised man mentioned in John 9:34-39 found congenial refuge here. They all had one thing in common, namely, that each had in some way come into contact with Jesus.

What was the substance of their prayers? They were full of enthusiasm (Luke 24:51-52). What was the cause of it? That is, what new ideas had entered their minds in the weeks since the execution of Jesus?

Powerful spiritual forces are arranged with reference to making a bit of weak human testimony produce astounding results, just as physical forces may be so arranged that slight pressure on an electric button will clear a channel of its rocks and open a pathway for a great ship into the ocean. An honest report of the results of believing in Jesus, the unseen but living Lord, published by a heterogeneous company of experimenters in the laboratory of personal life will establish the civilization of brotherly men in the earth.

Study I.—General Survey of the Book of Acts, and Jesus' Program for the Messianic Movement. 1:1-26

Seventh Day: The Selection of a New Witness. 1:15-26

Read 1:15-26. In this period of waiting for the important experience which is to be the signal for some decisive forward movement (1:4-5) the eleven apostles feel moved to fill the gap in their circle occasioned by the defection of Judas. Originally they had thought of themselves as the twelve chieftains who would stand, each at the head of a tribe, when the old tribal organization of the people should be restored by the Messiah. Read Matt. 19:28 and Acts 1:6. Just what is now before them they do not know, but it seems to them important that the circle of twelve be kept complete.

Were there more than 120 believers elsewhere? Read 1 Cor. 15:6. The dominant idea in their minds is the new, exhilarating thought that the death of the Messiah in a form so revolting to the Jewish mind (Gal. 3:13), and the horrible act of Judas in betraying a table companion (Mark 14:18), do not indicate the defeat of God, but are rather foreseen steps toward Messianic victory. For an explanation of their feeling see Luke 24:27, 44-46. Vv. 18-19, and perhaps v. 20 also, are a parenthetical comment by the author, and not a part of Peter's address to the "Brothers."

What were the qualifications requisite for apostleship, and what was the function of apostleship? Evidently there was a considerable number of eligible candidates. To whom do they pray in v. 24? The phrase, "who knowest the hearts of all men," naturally seems to describe Jehovah. On the other hand, Jesus was the one who had appointed the apostles (1:2).

God is slowly and surely carrying out a great plan for the betterment of men. Any small contribution that you may be able to make to-day to the accomplishment of this plan will not be frittered away for lack of competent oversight. The Lord of the enterprise is He who had the fragments gathered up "that nothing be lost" (John 6:12).

Study II.—The Empowering of the Witnesses and the First Testimony. 2:1-47

First Day: The Witnesses, Empowered by the Spirit Become Testifying Prophets. 2:1-21

Seven weeks after the crucifixion of Jesus came the "fiftieth-day feast," when thanks were given for the completed harvest and when, according to the Talmud, the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai was commemorated. At an early morning (v. 15) meeting of the "Brothers" something occurred which was ever after a memorable event in the history of the Church. It was an outbreak of *prophecy*. Read carefully vv. 17-18, which shows that this experience was so regarded.

At certain periods in Jewish history groups of prophets had been a familiar phenomenon. Their distinguishing characteristic was not the power to foretell future events, though this power they sometimes exercised. The best of them were great preachers of righteousness, like John the Baptist, whom Jesus regarded as unsurpassed by any of his predecessors (Luke 7:26-28). Many were less gifted than the great prophets. The prophetic power of such seems to have consisted in ecstatic experiences, in which they saw visions or uttered unintelligible ejaculations, chanted to the accompaniment of musical instruments, or in other ways behaved strangely under the influence of a divine spirit. Note the reference to "visions" and "dreams" in v. 17, and to queer behavior in v. 13. Especially read in the Old Testament 1 Samuel 10:5-13. Such spontaneous outbreaks had not been characteristic of the formal, didactic spirit of Pharisaism and the synagogue; but now, at the beginning of the new Messianic movement, there is a remarkable outbreak of prophetic inspiration. Such a phenomenon was expected to occur at the end of the age, in "the last days" before the Messianic judgment and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. It was to be confined not to a few select classes, as in earlier days, but was to be widespread and to include young and old, men and women, even male and female slaves. Read carefully vv. 16-21.

We live in the midst of the mystery of the influence of the Spirit of God upon the spirits of men. The constant miracle of the presence of God is being wrought in our lives. If we can increasingly discover the way to avail ourselves of it our lives gain in strength and steadiness.

Study II.—The Empowering of the Witnesses and the First Testimony. 2:1-47

Second Day: The Incidental Phenomena Connected with the Great Experience. 2:1-13

Early in the morning of the sacred day, when the Twelve and their associates were together, presumably for prayer, they suddenly became aware that their invisible Lord was making His first communication to them. An experience began which they regarded as proof that He was at the center of power and had remembered His disciples. Read 2:33. They heard a sound coming from the direction in which they had last seen Him go. Read 2:2 and 1:10. The sound resembled that of a gale of wind, though the air in the room was undisturbed. At the same time something that appeared like fiery, electric tongues of flame played about the person of each member of the group. Exhilaration of spirit producing excited behavior (2:13) and ejaculations of praise (2:11) accompanied these phenomena of sight and sound. The sound seems to have been heard by the crowds that filled the streets on their way to the temple, and was traced to this house (2:2) and to this group. Then the group seems to have gone with the crowd to the temple colonnades, where was ample room for the thousands who heard the first testimony.

What would these phenomena have naturally suggested to the Jewish minds of these new-born prophets? Perhaps the rushing wind suggested the power of an invisible agency, the fire a purifying influence, and the tongues the testimony. Another of the incidental phenomena was the so-called "gift of tongues." These Galilean Jews, who could speak only the Aramaic dialect of Hebrew, or at most also some Greek and a little Latin, were understood by the crowds to be speaking other languages. What they were understood to be saying seems to have been comparatively simple ascriptions of praise to God. Read v. 11. Perhaps the presence of the Spirit of God produced unusual psychic conditions, in which thought was conveyed from one mind to another in unusual ways. Certainly the easily abused "gift of tongues," described in 1 Cor. 14 (especially v. 19), seems to have consisted in the utterance of incoherent ejaculations, and not in the use of foreign languages.

It is the vital experience of fellowship with God, and not its incidental and varying physical effects, that is of enduring value.

STUDY II.—The Empowering of the Witnesses and the First Testimony. 2:1-47

THIRD DAY: THE PURPOSE OF THE EXPERIENCE. 2:1-14

The purpose of this unusual experience is evidently to be sought in its connection with the great campaign of testimony in which these witnesses were to engage. Read Luke 24:47-49. It was to give them power to lead out effectively in this long campaign. One cannot escape the impression that the author, as he sees representatives from so many parts of the world hearing the first testimony, thinks of this occasion as a miniature evangelization of the world at the beginning of the campaign, prophetic of its ultimate success on the large scale outlined in 1:8. Read vv. 8-11. Notice the significant phrase in v. 5. Of course they are still all Jews.

The Spirit of God is not conceived by Luke to manifest His presence in the world now for the first time (cf. 1:16). Two things, however, are now new: (1) That which a few men had enjoyed in past generations is henceforth to be the common experience of all the disciples of Jesus. It is for "all flesh," even bond-slaves (vv. 17-18); (2) the Spirit of God now manifests Himself in the lives of men for a new purpose, namely, to empower men to make an effective report of their personal experience with Jesus in the great campaign of testimony for the establishment of the Lordship of Jesus. In preparation for to-morrow's study, consider this question: What is there in the nature of such an experience that tends to make men effective witnesses?

The purpose of this experience was not simply to make effective public speakers. If you are praying for such an experience do not imagine that it will insure your holding large audiences in breathless attention to your words! In the original instance only one "lifted up his voice" in public speech (v. 14). Students in the classroom, laboratory, and athletic field, men in business and mothers in their homes and among their neighbors, need the empowering companionship in order to take the part assigned to "all flesh" in the great campaign of testimony.

Study II.—The Empowering of the Witnesses and the First Testimony. 2:1-47

Fourth Day: The Nature and Results of the Experience. 2:1-14, 37-47

The nature of this experience is best understood when it is seen to be the Spirit of God in personal association with these men. Such personal association must primarily produce a change in *character.* The person who has begun this life of companionship with the personal Spirit of God will become a better witness by becoming a better man. The fundamental idea of John the Baptist's water baptism had been to symbolize the moral purifying that would follow repentance. So the idea of a "baptism with the Holy Spirit" is that of purification of character through continued association with a holy personal force. Before reading further on this page read vv. 37-47, and see what evidences of improved *character* appear in the conduct of these men.

The person in association with the Holy Spirit ought to reproduce more and more clearly in his own character the fundamental traits that appear in the character of this Person with whom he associates. (1) One such trait noticeable here is joy. The approach of the Spirit affected their excitable oriental natures like wine. Read 2:13 and Ephesians 5:18. This new joy soon settled into a permanent, quiet gladness. Read 2:46-47. The joyful consciousness of friendly association with a mighty spiritual force gave birth to a triumphant, fearless testimony. (2) The Holy Spirit is sometimes called the Spirit of "Truth," that is, of sincerity. Is there any evidence here that this quality begins to appear in the testimony of these witnesses? (3) The Holy Spirit is also called the "Helper" ("Comforter," John 14:16). Do these men give evidence of new and helpful sympathy with other men? This quality, more than any other, makes testimony effective. The statement made in Acts 4:32-33 is not surprising.

What Jesus promised His disciples (1:5) seems to have been such association of the Spirit of God with the spirit of the disciple as would produce a divine sympathy, sincerity, and gladness, and would therefore make the disciple an effective witness by silent life and spoken word in the great campaign of testimony which is to secure a recognition of the Lordship of Jesus in all the earth.

Study II.—The Empowering of the Witnesses and the First Testimony. 2:1:47

Fifth Day: The First Testimony. 2:14-40

Before reading the testimony think for a moment of the situation. Some thousands of people are gathered in one of the great open courts of the temple enclosure. Jesus has within a few weeks been executed as one of the false messianic claimants that from time to time appear in the nation. In the barracks near by the soldiers charged with the execution of Jesus are still wearing the clothes that Jesus wore when He went out to His execution (John 19:23-24). The Galilean Peter, with his northern brogue (Matt. 26:73), is about to address them. He is a man sensible of the presence of God in his soul, and has about him eleven other praying men in the same frame of mind (v. 14). He proceeds to say that the excitement of himself and his associates is due to the fact that the critical "last days" of the Old Age, which just precede the judgment day of the Lord and the New Age, have come, and God's Spirit has begun to work, according to prophecy, upon common men like themselves. Read carefully vv. 15-21.

His next proposition is stated in v. 22. What is the proposition? Perhaps there were some present whose condition was proof of his proposition. He does not assert this as proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. His next proposition is stated in v. 23. What is it? "Lawless" men means foreigners, Romans, who had not the Mosaic law. God had allowed Judas to deliver Him up. The act was not the victory of shrewd and wicked men over God that it seemed to be. And now, in vv. 24-36, he makes and proves his startling central proposition. What is it, and how does he prove it? The subject will be continued to-morrow.

Information about, and personal experience with, Jesus furnish the material for our testimony. Have you ever made an inventory of this material and arranged it with reference to giving testimony?

Study II.—The Empowering of the Witnesses and the First Testimony. 2:1-47

Sixth Day: The First Testimony (*Concluded*). 2:14-41

The main point in Peter's testimony is that the man Jesus so wonderfully endorsed by God during His lifetime (v. 22) is now proved by God's raising Him from the dead and taking Him into His own glory, to be the Christ. Peter rests his case partly upon a new interpretation of scripture. Under the guidance of Jesus the apostles have been able to make a new discovery in the exegesis of the prophets (cf. Luke 24:27, 44-47). In prophecies, which it is assumed all will recognize as Messianic, they point out what no rabbi has ever dreamed, namely, a prediction of the death and resurrection of the Messiah! What the prophets predict about the Messiah they can testify has happened to Jesus. Therefore Jesus is the Messiah! In Ps. 16 David is now seen to have foretold that the Christ would go to the regions of the dead ("Hades"), but would not remain there. David was not speaking about himself, but about the Christ (vv. 29-31). That Jesus did return from Hades the apostles can testify (v. 32). That God has taken Him into his own glory is made evident by the phenomena of this eventful morning, for He had promised them to give them some such signal that He was with God (v. 33). Furthermore, we ought to have expected the Messiah to go to God for a while and await there the subjugation of His enemies, instead of remaining continually on the earth, for such we now see was the prediction of David (vv. 34-35). Therefore, let everyone know that THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL HAS CRUCIFIED ITS LORD (v. 36)!

No wonder that the crowds were thrilled with horror, fear, and chagrin (v. 37). Peter appeals to hope (vv. 38-39); also to fear (v. 40).

Two questions, for such consideration as your time may warrant, are these: How may Peter's argument be stated in the vernacular of modern thought? What hints regarding the way in which to move men to decision are afforded by Peter's method?

A growing sense of fellowship with the Spirit of the living God is represented as an inducement to begin the Christian life (v. 38). Perhaps in the artificial bustle and unhealthful hurry of our lives we do not sufficiently give ourselves to the quietness of this thought.

Study II.—The Empowering of the Witnesses and the First Testimony. 2:1-47

Seventh Day: The Results of the First Testimony. 2:41-47

Read 2:42-47. It at once became evident that it was not sufficient merely to secure a baptismal confession of the Lordship of Jesus. There was a life to be developed. In v. 42 the means of developing this life are mentioned. The first means was the "apostles' teaching." When the crowds returned to the temple area the next day, what questions would they have been most likely to ask the apostles? What questions would you have asked if you had been there? Very likely out of such "teaching" as the needs of the people demanded, our first three Gospels were later developed.

"The fellowship" means the "sharing." They shared not only their property, when an emergency demanded such fellowship; but, as far as possible, each shared all the joys and hardships of his brother's situation. Three strong bonds were binding them together,—a common friend, deliverance from a common peril, and a common hope. Did their fellowship in property involve the renunciation of the principle of private property? Read 5:1-4. The situation was unusual. Many doubtless were poor, for Jesus' work had largely been among the poor. Read Luke 7:22. Often confession of Jesus' name meant social ostracism and loss of work. John 9:22.

The "breaking of bread" here, and in Acts 20:11, seems to indicate the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16). According to 2:46 something out of which the Lord's Supper later developed may have been observed each day. "Till he come" was the thought that each of these first Christians read daily as he looked into the faces of his brothers at table.

The "prayers" were probably the regular synagogue and temple prayers. The initial gladness of Pentecost did not wear off, and large numbers applied daily at the apostolic headquarters for the new baptism (vv. 46-47).

We need to take definite pains to develop "the life" by a systematic use of means,—by sharing as far as may be the situation of others, by studying the teaching, by prayer, by the remembrance of Jesus at the daily meal.

Study III.—The Failure of the Priests in Their Effort to Stop the Testimony. 3:1—4:31

First Day: A Cripple Is Cured by the Invisible Jesus. 3:1-10

The first Christians had no suspicion that any religious institution or habit needed to be changed after their recognition of the Messiahship of Jesus. Going up to the temple for the usual afternoon prayer hour, Peter and John found at the temple gate a poor cripple who had been allowed by the temple authorities a place favorable for appeal to the stream of temple worshipers. As they drew near the gate Peter felt an impulse to do for the man what he had so often seen Jesus do for the unfortunate. Perhaps he had had some experience in curing the lame during Jesus' lifetime (Matt. 10:7-8). To his great gratification he finds that the use of Jesus' name is effective. Read 3:1-10, trying to see the picture portrayed in each phrase.

Three things were made clear to Peter by this incident: (1) It was evident that Jesus' compassion had not ceased. In His invisible glory He still felt toward crippled sufferers just as He had felt a few months before. (2) There was still a real relationship between Jesus and His disciples. The disciple could appeal to his invisible Lord as he had appealed to Him in the flesh, and find Him a responding force (v. 16). (3) It was evident that the disciples were to be the persons through whom the power of the invisible Jesus was to be applied to such cases of need.

The sorest need of men is not the need of stronger legs. There are many crippled spirits making, it may be, only mute signals of distress, which those absorbed in their own concerns never see, even on their way to the place of prayer, but which disciples of Jesus, trained by their Lord to consider the finding of such their life-work, quickly discover. It is to these crippled spirits, discouraged, sullen, bitter, frightened, apathetic, as the case may be, that the Christian witness comes with a heart peaceful, confident, sympathetic, and with a testimony to the power and love of his Lord. He takes them by the hand and says: "What I have I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Chapters 3-8, A. D. 30-34 (Zahn).

STUDY III.—The Failure of the Priests in Their Effort to Stop the Testimony. 3:1—4:31

SECOND DAY: THE TESTIMONY IN SOLOMON'S PORCH. 3:11-26

Read 3:11-26, and as you read, without spending too much time, note the points that at once impress you, as like those of Peter's address in the preceding chapter.

"Solomon's Porch," or colonnade, a favorite resort of Jesus (John 10:23) was a favorite place of assembly for the first Christians (Acts 5:12). The crowd quickly gathered here, attracted by the excited antics (v. 8) of the man who had just been healed at the gate. Peter, exhilarated by the sense of connection with Jesus which his experience with the lame man has just given him, proceeds to deliver another testimony. It contains certain new ideas. Notice in v. 13 (Revised Version) the new title applied to Jesus. Evidently Isaiah's "Servant of Jehovah" is in Peter's mind. Glance at Isaiah 42:1-4 and 52:13-15. In accusing them of the Messiah's murder, Peter uses more incisive language.

Read vv. 13-14. The Roman procurator himself recognized the innocence of Jesus and wished to save Him. They asked for a destroyer of life, and killed the "Prince" or "Author" of life! They were, therefore, engaged in an awful conflict with God who, by a resurrection to which the apostles can testify, undid their murderous work. But Jesus, in spite of the murderous hate of His enemies, continues His merciful work among them. The cure of this cripple is an instance of it. Their confident trust in the Lord Messiah has given the Messiah opportunity to work through their agency (v. 16). In v. 17 he comforts them a little.

"All the people saw him walking and praising God" (v. 9). It was this man's evident sense of having been benefited by God that made him so effective among the people. One reason why our lives are less effective than they might be is, that we do not repeatedly give definite thought to the good things that come into our lives from God.

Study III.—The Failure of the Priests in Their Effort to Stop the Testimony. 3:1—4:31

Third Day: The Testimony in Solomon's Porch. 3:11-26 (*Concluded*)

Read vv. 19-21, in which Peter shows more clearly than in his former address what he conceives to be the immediate program of the Messianic movement. The Messiah has been taken to God until the time come for the restoration of such innocence and peace as existed before sin entered the world, or perhaps restoration of Jewish independence and supremacy (cf. 1:6). Peter here represents the view that was current among the Jews of his day. The repentance of the nation will hasten this period and the return of the Messiah with His reign of peace and love. The point at which Peter and his friends differ from the ordinary Jew is in recognizing that the Messiah, after His appearance among the people, is withdrawn into the heavens for a time. It is only recently that they have reached this conclusion, for in 1:6 they had quite another conception.

To what motive does Peter appeal in vv. 22-23? To what motive does Peter appeal in vv. 24-26? All nations would in some way finally share the blessings of the Messianic reign, but Peter seems to feel that foreigners naturally could have no chance at these blessings until the Jews had first availed themselves of them. After the Jews had turned to the Messiah, the foreigners, by becoming Jewish proselytes, could also have some subordinate share in the Messianic glory. Read v. 26. This view-point explains why the apostles did not at once begin the execution of the commission given them by Jesus, as reported in Matt. 28:19.

"Every soul that shall not hearken unto that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (v. 23). He who will not accept Jesus' ideal of the brotherly life must inevitably lose his place in the great family. God is working through certain irresistible sociological forces to eliminate the selfish man from human society.

Study III.—The Failure of the Priests in Their Effort to Stop the Testimony. 3:1—4:31

Fourth Day: The Witnesses Arrested by the Priests. 4:1-4

While Peter was still speaking to the crowds in the colonnade there suddenly appeared a group of determined men, consisting of the chief of the temple police (next in authority to the high priest), a few of the leading priests, and some other prominent members of the Sadducean party, who pushed their way through the crowd and arrested Peter and John. Read 4:1-3. The Sadducees in general were the more aristocratic, theologically liberal element in the nation. Greek civilization had penetrated even Palestine, and the Sadducees were far more open to its influence than were the conservative Pharisees. They were chiefly significant in the national life, because the high priest and all his family were Sadducees. The high priest was appointed by the Roman government and was ex-officio president of the highest Jewish court, the sanhedrin. The Sadducean priests had urged the execution of Jesus because they had shrewdly foreseen that His success would interfere with their political ambitions, which included the control of the temple revenues. It was a part of their theological liberalism that they did not believe in existence after death (Mark 12:18 and Acts 23:8), though perhaps they would themselves have described this view as primitive Jewish doctrine from which the Pharisees had unwarrantably departed. Naturally, it annoyed them to have the doctrine of the resurrection, and particularly the resurrection of their enemy Jesus, preached under their very eyes in the temple colonnades where their authority prevailed. Therefore, this afternoon, when a large crowd was present, seemed to them an opportune time to attack the preachers. Perhaps also the wild antics of the cured cripple (v. 8) and the rush of the people in all directions toward Solomon's colonnade (v. 11) seemed to the captain of the temple police disorderly conduct that served as a good pretext for making an arrest.

The Sadducees faced truths which they did not recognize. How can one guard himself against being blinded to great truths by his prejudices?

Study III.—The Failure of the Priests in Their Effort to Stop the Testimony. 3:1—4:31

Fifth Day: The Trial and Defense of the Witnesses. 4:5-13

The next morning a meeting of the sanhedrin was called. Read vv. 5-6. What charge do you suppose the priests planned to bring against these men? And what action do you suppose the priests had planned to have the court take?

Whatever their plan, their first surprise was occasioned by the extreme boldness of the prisoners. Men were ordinarily abashed and awkward in the presence of this assemblage of distinguished priests and rabbis. Peter began to feel the inner stirring of the same power that had touched his spirit on the day of Pentecost and probably many times since. His courage rose and his intellectual perception of the strength of his case was clear. The prisoners were being prosecuted "for a good deed done to a sick man!" Read vv. 7-9. The deed was unhesitatingly ascribed to the Jesus who, only a few weeks before, had stood where Peter now was standing. Peter accused them, in language that some of them had heard from Jesus Himself (Mark 12:10), of professional incompetence and stupidity. They were like builders that had not sense enough to recognize the stone sent up from the quarry by the architect to serve as cornerstone! Read vv. 10-11. Even now there was no other than this Jesus to whom the murderers and all the nation could look for the realization of their hope of national greatness and personal blessedness in the Messianic kingdom. Read v. 12. The vigor of this attack, particularly as it came from men who had never studied dialectics with the rabbis, disconcerted the court. The perplexity increased when some of the sheriffs recognized these men as the two who had been hanging about on the night of Jesus' trial, when the conduct of one of them had been far from bold. Read v. 13, and compare Mark 14:66-71, or perhaps John 18:10, 25-27.

During the hours of this night Peter and John had doubtless followed the advice Jesus gave them on that other night (Mark 14:37-38) when Peter failed so miserably because he did not follow it.

Study III.—The Failure of the Priests in Their Effort to Stop the Testimony. 3:1—4:31

Sixth Day: The Defeat of the Sanhedrin. 4:14-22

Perhaps the priests had taken it for granted that the two men would not dare to ascribe the cure to Jesus in the august presence of the sanhedrin that had so recently condemned Him, and that they would, therefore, be discredited in the eyes of those to whom they were daily preaching Jesus. Or they may have anticipated that the two men would ascribe the cure to Jesus and may have planned then to proceed against them as dangerous adherents of a blasphemous agitator. The unexpected boldness of the prisoners at once upset any plan they may have formed on the first assumption. What two circumstances made it seem impossible to proceed against the men according to their second plan? Read vv. 14-22.

A modern prosecuting attorney would have asked the court to order the removal of the healed cripple from the court room. So long as he stood there, with his face full of joy, shifting his weight from one foot to the other in the glad exhilaration of his newly found strength, sneers and smiles died half-formed on the faces of these shrewd priestly politicians. Read v. 14. They sought relief from their embarrassment in a private session. The opposition that had begun so bravely, and that seemed likely utterly to overwhelm the testimony, ended in a weak threat which the witnesses on the spot flatly refused to heed.

What was the fundamental fault of these priests?

The ultimate test of the testimony is the result in life produced by its acceptance. It is worth every Christian's while to acquaint himself with cases of marked transformation of life, such as the history of every city mission furnishes. There are few small communities also where they are not to be found. They present no more real, but more evident, demonstration of the spiritually wonderful working of God than is afforded by ordinary Christian experience.

Study III.—The Failure of the Priests in Their Effort to Stop the Testimony. 3:1—4:31

Seventh Day: The Report of the Trial and Its Effect on the Witnesses. 4:23-31

It had doubtless been an anxious night and day for Nazarenes all over the city, and an unusual number were in Solomon's Porch or at some other place of rendezvous the day after the trial. Or perhaps it was some smaller group to which the two men reported their experience with the sanhedrin in vv. 23-31. Read these verses and make a list of the thoughts that are uppermost in the minds of the believers. Probably this prayer represents the general ideas that were in the minds of all, and that were expressed in various forms by different persons. Note their identification in the present situation of the various opponents mentioned in the Psalm. What two things do they especially pray for? They are conscious of an alliance with a mighty invisible ally. The Spirit of the living God had risen up in Peter, and looked calmly out at the proud, merciless combination of priestcraft, political ambition, and theological hate in the sanhedrin, and thrown it into confusion. Their sense of the nearness of God must have been greatly stimulated by the phenomenon mentioned in v. 31.

It becomes evident that the testimony, both in its ancient and modern form, is two-fold: (1) "I have seen good reasons for supposing that Jesus Christ is a living personality and therefore the Christ of God entitled to control my life." (2) "I have accepted His control and find myself being saved by Him from a daily life of increasing selfishness and its ultimate misery to a daily life of increasing unselfishness with its growing peace."

Study IV.—The Movement is Firmly Established in Jerusalem. 4:32—6:7

First Day: The Life of Fellowship and Its Peril. 4:32—5:11

Jesus seemed to have risen up in the lives of the disciples! Read 4:32-35.

Two conspicuous instances of generosity are cited, and in such close connection as to make one suspect some connection between them. A Levite, born in the island of Cyprus, sold a piece of real estate and put the entire proceeds of the sale into the apostolic treasury. He was a highly gifted and popular public speaker. The apostles called him a very "son of exhortation." Read vv. 35-37. He was rapidly making his way to the position of leadership that he afterward held. Read Acts 11:19-26; 13:2.

Something about Joseph's rapid advancement in popularity seemed to stir up a man and his wife, named Ananias and Sapphira. Perhaps Ananias was aspiring to a position of leadership like that of Joseph, and felt that his ambition was not likely to be realized unless he, too, made some conspicuous contribution to the common fund. He and his wife brooded over the matter in daily discussion at home, and finally determined to sell a piece of property and bring part of the proceeds as though it were all. Ananias appeared at the apostolic headquarters with his bag of clinking coins, deposited it at the apostles' feet and waited for applause. Three hours later his wife was on her way to the same place, eagerly anticipating the commendatory words and glances that would greet her. Read 5:1-11. Burial in the East sometimes takes place almost immediately after death. Lieutenant Conder (*Tent Work in Palestine*, p. 326) reports a case of burial fifteen minutes after death.

What were the three or four great faults of which the man and his wife were guilty? Why were they so severely punished?

One needs often to put this question to himself,—Do I desire to appear to be better than I am willing to take the pains to become?

Chapters 3-8, A. D. 30-34 (Zahn).

Study IV.—The Movement is Firmly Established in Jerusalem. 4:32—6:7

Second Day: The Life of Fellowship and Its Peril (*Concluded*). 4:32—5:11

In the composite act of this couple there were not simply the desire for prominence, the love of money, and the lie, but also what Peter strongly emphasized in vv. 3-4, 9. They were either oblivious to the presence of God or had so low a conception of the Spirit of God as to suppose that they could trifle with Him.

Peter, either through previous acquaintance with the plans of the two, or with immediate insight into the heart of Ananias, faced him with a sudden statement of his guilt and the man fell dead. In what state of nervous excitement and trepidation Ananias may have been when he appeared before Peter we do not know. Even though the process of death be physically accounted for, it would be none the less an impressive and awful consequence of guilt.

The action of these persons was a fundamental renunciation of the Christian life. The two fundamental features of the life advocated by Jesus were (1) unselfish good-will, or the readiness to do things without expectation of remuneration (read Luke 14:12-14); and (2) honesty. Both of these qualities were lacking in these two persons. The social and religious life of the day was honeycombed with love of money, love of show, and with hypocrisy. Jesus' movement had been organized as a protest against such a social system. It was, therefore, essential that, in the beginning, when the reputation of the movement was not yet established, it should be absolutely free from the taint and suspicion of hypocrisy. Especially if there was danger that Ananias might become a prominent leader in the new movement, like Joseph Barnabas, strenuous measures to prevent it were necessary.

"Fear" of what (v. 11)?

The value of testimony depends upon the sincerity of the witnesses. Language that is either extravagant or conventional makes the impression that it does not report real experience, and so vitiates testimony. It is equally possible for a man to be insincere in his Christian giving. His giving purports to have as its motive, interest in the object to which the gift is made. If this be not really the case, its value as testimony is vitiated.

Study IV.—The Movement is Firmly Established in Jerusalem. 4:32—6:7

Third Day: Popularity of the Movement Among the Common People. 5:12-16

Read 5:12-16. Note where the public meetings were still being held. Does the information contained in this paragraph explain why the priests allowed the meetings in Solomon's Porch to go on unmolested?

In v. 13 certain classes do not dare to identify themselves with the new movement, but the common people are enthusiastically favorable to it. Who are those who do not dare to join it? In what sense was it "to the Lord" that new believers were being added (v. 14)?

Picture the scene described in v. 15. The statement suggests experiences in the life of Jesus. (Mark 6:55-56.) The people began to come in from the suburban towns, and perhaps from Judæan villages far away. The text does not say that all upon whom Peter's shadow fell were healed. In the cases of those that were healed is it to be supposed that God's power operated in accordance with psychic laws?

The report of this extreme popularity of the apostles is prefatory to an account of the activity of the opposition provoked by it.

Men are ready to flock from every farm, village and city to the place where there is genuine sympathy.

Study IV.—The Movement is Firmly Established in Jerusalem. 4:32—6:7

Fourth Day: Renewed Opposition of the Priests. 5:17-28

The priests were becoming desperate. If they could not succeed in enforcing their commands and threats, they would lose the confidence of the Roman government which kept them in office. They felt that this Messianic movement might at any moment develop into a popular uprising, for which the Roman authorities would hold them responsible. Cf. John 11:47-48. Furthermore, everyone who believed in Jesus thereby proclaimed that the priests had blundered, to say the least, in executing Jesus. This was a serious reflection upon their professional competency. Also the personal popularity of these untrained laymen made the priests jealous. Peter, on his way to the temple, sometimes walked through an avenue of sick persons who were waiting for him. The high priest had no such experience! Read vv. 17-18.

Read vv. 19-28. How did the men get out of prison? The prisoners themselves must have reported the method, for no one else would have been in a position to know. In any case it was evident that God meant the testimony to go right on. When the trumpet called the morning relay of priests to their service, and the early morning worshipers began to appear, the witnesses were again in their usual place. Note that the high priest has been put upon the defensive (v. 28).

"Speak to the people all the words of this life" (v. 20). It is perfectly evident that God loves the people, the people of the crowded street, men and women, bootblacks and bank presidents, coachmen and clerks. He means to have them all know about the "life." The voice of a man crying out the testimony shall never fail in the earth. The steady proclamation of this testimony going on year after year is one of the most impressive phenomena of history.

Study IV.—The Movement is Firmly Established in Jerusalem. 4:32—6:7

Fifth Day: The Opposition of the Priests Again Defeated. 5:29-42

Read Peter's defense in vv. 29-32, remembering the priests' desperate frame of mind. According to Peter's statements he and the other apostles, by virtue of having been the chosen associates of Jesus, are in God's sight the real leaders of the nation and these dignified priests are usurpers. The priests became bitterly angry and were ready at once to sentence the apostles to death (v. 33). At this juncture a note of moderation was sounded from another section of the sanhedrin. The Pharisees have not hitherto appeared upon the scene, although bitterly opposed to Jesus during most of His public career. The Pharisees remained inactive after the death of Jesus because the Sadducean priests, as custodians of the temple courts, had to take notice of the Nazarenes who chose the temple courts as their rendezvous. When once the priests had attacked the Nazarenes for teaching the resurrection, naturally the Pharisees did not care to join them, for the Pharisees were themselves stanch defenders of belief in a resurrection and future life.

The Pharisee who now advised moderation was, according to the Talmud, a very famous rabbi and is well known in Christian history because of one of his disciples. Read Acts 22:3. What is the rabbi's argument, as stated in vv. 34-39? Is he favorably inclined to the new movement or contemptuous? The apostles were whipped, but the whipping did not stop the testimony. It only made them realize how much they loved their Lord (vv. 40-42).

We come of an heroic lineage of sufferers. The power of Jesus to retain century after century an affection that is ready to suffer, not for a principle merely, but for Him, is a striking phenomenon in the history of religions.

Study IV.—The Movement is Firmly Established in Jerusalem. 4:32—6:7

Sixth Day: The New Movement Begins to Organize. 6:1-6

The movement up to this time has been a spontaneous growth which has not needed any formal organization or division of labor. Numbers had, however, now become so great as to demand the systematizing of the work. Read 6:1-6, noting (1) what the occasion of organization was, and (2) by just what steps the organization was effected.

There were in Jerusalem both natives of Palestine, called "Hebrews," who spoke the Aramaic vernacular (sometimes called Hebrew, Acts 21:40), and foreign-born Jews who did not understand Aramaic. Some of these foreign-born Jews had come to feel that their poor were not being adequately looked after in the daily distribution of food. The Board of Relief which was organized to remedy this defect was mainly composed of men with Greek names. If this is a fair indication that they were Greek-speaking Jews, a generous concession was made to the party that had felt itself aggrieved. Do you see why the three qualities mentioned in v. 3 would be especially needed in relief work?

One member of this Board of Relief, a man named Stephen, was not merely a man of affairs, but was also an effective public speaker (v. 10). He also, like Peter, was able to perform "miracles" that are described as exhibitions of compassionate power (v. 8), and that probably consisted in curing the sick. He was probably a foreign-born Jew, for it was in certain synagogues of the Greek-speaking Jews that he seems to have presented the Nazarene argument (v. 9). A part of the purpose of this paragraph (vv. 1-6) seems to be to introduce Stephen into the narrative and to prepare the reader for the important part he is to play in the history immediately following.

It requires fully as much of the Holy Spirit's presence to do business fairly as it does to preach the gospel effectively from a pulpit.

Study IV.—The Movement is Firmly Established in Jerusalem. 4:32—6:7

Seventh Day: Summary of Progress. 6:7

The progress made during the period under consideration has been made in spite of bitter opposition on the part of the priests. The success of the movement in Jerusalem is now impressively described by stating that a large company of the priests themselves have been won over to the new movement. According to Josephus, the total number of priests was 20,000, and, as they served in "courses," relays of them were constantly coming up from their country homes to do service in the temple. (Read Luke 1:5, 8, 23, 39, 40.) During their leisure hours, when they were off duty, they had exceedingly favorable and frequent opportunities to attend the meetings in Solomon's Porch. Many of them were earnest, God-fearing men, to whom the testimony borne by the witnesses appealed with great force, and it is not strange that many joined the new movement. This must have been very exasperating to the chief priests.

Glance over the portion of Acts that has been covered in Part I and determine what are the most prominent ideas that have appeared in the narrative. Which of these ideas seem to you most to need emphasis in the life of the modern church?

"Oh, where are kings and empires now
Of old that went and came?
But, Lord, thy church is praying yet,
A thousand years the same.

"We mark her goodly battlements,
And her foundations strong;
We hear within the solemn voice
Of her unending song.

"For not like kingdoms of the world
Thy holy church, O God!
Though earthquake shocks are threatening her,
And tempests are abroad;

"Unshaken as eternal hills,
Immovable she stands,
A mountain that shall fill the earth,
A house not made by hands."

—Arthur Cleveland Coxe.

PART II

THE WITNESSES BEGIN TO MOVE OUT FROM JERUSALEM TOWARD FOREIGNERS. 6:8—9:31

STUDY V.—The Witness, Stephen, Is Killed. 6:8—7:60.

STUDY VI.—Persecution Scatters the Witnesses Throughout Judæa and Samaria. 8:1-40.

STUDY VII.—Jesus Selects a Great Witness for the Foreign World. 9:1-31.

Study V.—The Witness, Stephen, Is Killed. 6:8—7:60

First Day: Opposition from a New Quarter. 6:8-15

In accordance with Gamaliel's advice (5:33-40) the new movement was allowed to go on unhindered for a time, in the expectation that it would run itself out. This did not, however, turn out to be the case, and the opposition again asserted itself. This time it was no longer the chief priests that took the lead. The synagogues and not the temple colonnades were the scene of action. The synagogue was the Jewish meeting-house where families met on the Sabbath for instruction in the law of Moses. On week-days the same building, or some part of it, was used as a schoolhouse for the children. It was also a kind of police court, where offenders against the law were punished. (Read Matt. 10:17.) The great men of the synagogue were rabbis.

In a large city, where more than one synagogue would be needed, certain classes would unite in a synagogue organization. It was especially true in Jerusalem that foreign-born Jews from the same part of the world would combine in the establishment of a synagogue. See the indication of this in v. 9, where possibly one, two, three, or even five synagogues are mentioned.

The Freedmen's ("Libertines") synagogue was probably composed of Jews who had been slaves, but were now manumitted, or of the descendants of such.

Among these foreign-born Jews, and presumably in the synagogue service, bitter opposition to the new movement began. All the Nazarenes had doubtless continued to be regular attendants upon the synagogue service, and about this time began to present their argument for the Messiahship of Jesus from the synagogue platforms.

Read 6:8-15, and state the new charge made against the Nazarenes.

"Grace and power" (v. 8). Kindness of heart and power to make the kindness effective in the lives of others are both needful.

Chapters 3-8, A. D. 30-34 (Zahn).

Study V.—The Witness, Stephen, Is Killed. 6:8—7:60

Second Day: The Charge Against Stephen. 6:8-15

Among the men who had opportunity to present the Nazarene argument from synagogue platforms, Stephen of the Board of Relief was, for some reason, the most conspicuous. Perhaps the apostles were confining their efforts to the meetings in the temple colonnade. Angry voices began to ring out against him. Perhaps among the "Cilicians" was the prominent young rabbi, Saul, for he was a Cilician-born Jew. (Read Acts 22:3.) Stephen seemed to get the better of the argument and converts were probably being rapidly made in the synagogue audiences. The rabbis, therefore, began to circulate industriously a rumor that was certain to arouse bitter prejudice against him. The general character of this rumor is stated in v. 11. Its more specific form appears in vv. 13-14. The charge was calculated to arouse all classes against him. The rabbis who were the stanch champions of the law, and many of the people over whom the rabbis had very great influence, would naturally feel outraged. Moreover, the beautiful temple was the pride not only of the priests, but of all the people. What had been the previous attitude of the common people toward the new movement? Read again 2:47; 4:21; 5:13. It becomes evident that the supreme court of the nation, the sanhedrin, will take the man's case up. The peril is the most serious that has yet confronted the Nazarenes.

Was there any truth in the charge brought against Stephen? How generally do you suppose what is reported in Mark 13:2 was known?

Stephen was able to endure unfair criticism without being embittered or irritated (v. 15). It is the sense of inner fellowship with God which enables a man to meet this severe test of character (v. 5).

Study V.—The Witness, Stephen, Is Killed. 6:8—7:60

Third Day: The Truth About Stephen. 6:8-15

It is noticeable that Stephen is not charged with any present laxity in his observance of temple worship, or the laws of Moses relating to daily conduct. The charge against him concerns his expectation of future change. It seems probable that there must have been something in Stephen's attitude toward the law and the temple that prejudiced minds could distort into the charges preferred against him before the sanhedrin. One of these charges is the one upon which the sanhedrin had at first tried to convict Jesus Himself. Read Mark 14:57-59. Stephen probably knew that Jesus had predicted the destruction of the beautiful temple. Perhaps many of the Nazarenes knew it, but if so they would naturally have said little about it in public. If the temple should be destroyed, all that large section of the Mosaic law which regulated temple ritual would of necessity be abrogated. So that "to destroy this place" might be construed to mean also "to change the customs." Still most, if not all, of the Nazarenes who anticipated the destruction of the temple as a part of Jesus' Messianic judgment, probably supposed that it would be replaced by another and better one. The charge that had been preferred against Jesus represented that He proposed to build a better one in place of the present structure (Mark 14:58).

Did Stephen differ from the great majority of the Nazarenes at this point? Did he foresee a religion without a temple? Read his long defense in 7:1-53, and see whether it throws any light on this point; also see whether it is a "defense," whether it denies the charge made against him.

To be at peace in the midst of confusion, to keep cool when other men are angry, to maintain an invincible good will when attacked by hate, to keep in the narrow path of absolute sincerity when associating with hypocrites,—these are achievements to be learned under the daily discipline of Jesus Christ.

Study V.—The Witness, Stephen, Is Killed. 6:8—7:60

Fourth Day: Stephen's Defense. 6:12—7:53

Probably Paul, who was present, gave Luke much of his information regarding the trial of Stephen. In the solemn moment after the charge had been read, and before the high priest, as president, asked the prisoner for his defense, the face of the prisoner seemed to Paul to glow like the peacefully majestic face of an angel (6:15).

One count in the charges against Stephen was clearly disproved by his appearance and his defense. He evidently was not a blatant blasphemer who was continually ranting against holy things (6:11, 13). Read vv. 2, 22, 30-38, 44.

The defense gives evidence here and there that Stephen really did not regard the temple as essential to worship. God's wonderful revelations to their great ancestor Abraham had not been made in a temple (vv. 2-8). God had been with Joseph in Egypt, and with Moses in Midian, the wilderness, and Mt. Sinai, where wonderful things happened without a temple (vv. 29, ff.). Great David had no temple (vv. 45-46), and when Solomon, his son, proposed to build one God protested that it was hardly necessary (vv. 48-50). The great fact of God in the soul had been vitally experienced by Stephen, and he could say, emphatically: "The Most High dwelleth not in houses made by hands" (v. 48). It was then true that Stephen expected Jesus to destroy the temple, abrogate its ritual, and not build another temple in its place. He had seen the vision of the Revelator, with "no temple therein." Read Rev. 21:22. He was beginning to branch off on a path that led to the position finally to be taken by a man who that day sat among his accusers.

Are you open to new truth coming from any quarter? Can you recognize truth, even when advocated by those whom you dislike, or against whom you are prejudiced?

Study V.—The Witness, Stephen, Is Killed. 6:8—7:60

Fifth Day: The Defense of Stephen (*Concluded*). 6:12—7:57

Stephen's defense made it clear that those who had accused him of "blasphemy" were "false accusers," but seemed to concede that he did not regard the temple as essential to worship in its ultimate and ideal form. A third idea ran through the defense,—which more and more angered the sanhedrin as they began to feel its sting: *The nation had always abused its God-sent deliverers.* Find three flagrant illustrations of this in vv. 9-43. The allusion to a Messianic prophecy in connection with one of these cases (vv. 37-41) forewarned the sanhedrin that he was preparing to charge them, as Peter had previously done, with murdering the Messiah. He soon did so with a fiercely indignant invective (7:51-52) that justified his reputation (6:10). They pretended to be God's holy (circumcised) people, but they felt and heard like pagans (v. 51). Stephen went still further and accused them of hypocritical failure to keep the law they were so eager to impose upon others. He seems to have known of dark scandals and ugly secrets in the private lives of these great men, that were hideously inconsistent with their unctuous pretensions to piety (v. 53). This charge coming from one who was supposed to be a lawless anarchist, and who was on trial for his life, so angered some of the priests and rabbis that their features became distorted with rage (7:54), and when, after gazing silently upward for a moment, he announced to them that he saw the Nazarene Jesus standing at God's right hand, they became furious. The session broke up in disorder, and they hustled him with their own hands out of the court room (vv. 55-57).

"The Son of God goes forth to war
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar:
Who follows in His train?

"The martyr first, whose eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave,
Who saw his Master in the sky,
And called on Him to save."

—Reginald Heber.

Study V.—The Witness, Stephen, Is Killed. 6:8—7:60

Sixth Day: The Death of Stephen. 7:58-60

The priests and rabbis hurried their prisoner through the city gates, and then had him stoned — if he had been a venomous snake or a mad dog. No formal sentence seems to have been passed by the sanhedrin, for if there had been such sentence it would have required the endorsement of the Roman procurator. This was rather a case of semi-legal lynching. Human life was lightly esteemed in the first century, and the sanhedrin leaders knew that the Roman procurator was not likely to feel any concern about the lynching of a poor Jew by a company of influential citizens. To be sure they proceeded to do their lawless deed with due regard for ceremonial propriety. Compare v. 58 with Leviticus 24:14; Deuteronomy 17:7. Such conduct simply verified Jesus' criticism of them as it appears in Matt. 23:23.

Stephen prayed to Jesus to receive his spirit (v. 59). As the stones struck him the divine anæsthetic was gently administered. He "fell asleep" (v. 60) and passed out into the quiet glory of God. Can you conceive what really happened when Jesus "received Stephen's spirit" (v. 59)? Certainly the expression indicates that Stephen's career was no more ended when his body lay bruised and bleeding among the sharp-edged stones than was the career of Jesus ended when His body hung limp and lifeless on the cross.

There was a heavenly side to this dark scene of human hate. The "other world" was very near. Stephen's soul had not to pass through vast inter-planetary spaces in order to alight upon its confines. From where he was standing in the court room he could see its very heart and center (v. 55). One wonders whether some slight shifting of the view-point, some quick transformation of the senses, might not introduce one into the glories of the "other world."

"But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is."
—Tennyson: *The Passing of Arthur.*

Study V.—The Witness, Stephen, Is Killed. 6:8—7:60

Seventh Day: The Career of Stephen

Review for a few moments to-day the career of Stephen. What native gifts does he seem to have possessed? Why was he so hated? What contribution did he make to the cause in life? In death?

"Kuo Lao-man was the old letter-carrier and general servant. Mr. Kuo said: . . . 'I was a long time with Pastor Pitkin. He was composed and calm. He told me of some things the schoolboys had buried, hoping to save them, and then took out a letter he had just written to Pi Tai Tai [Mrs. Pitkin], and his camera, and said: You go with me, and we will bury these things in the ground under the dove-cote, so when all is over you will know where to find them. Send or take them to the soldiers from the west, or whoever comes with them, so that my wife may be sure to receive them. We went out, dug quite a deep hole and put them carefully in, wrapped in waterproof covers. Then we went back to the pastor's room and talked till after midnight. We knew little of the fate of the Presbyterian friends, but were sure that none were living. At last Mr. Pitkin said: Do not risk your life any longer, but get over the wall in some place as retired as may be, and get into hiding before dawn. My letter may be found, and destroyed. If you learn that it is, send word to Pi Tai Tai that God was with me, and His peace was my consolation. Tell her that when Horace [his little son] is twenty-five years old I hope he will come to China to preach the Gospel in my place. Then we knelt down and prayed together, and he sent me away. About the next day I do not know very much. The pastor was killed in the compound, but the ladies were taken to the Boxer headquarters. I have not dared to go back, but others have been there, and they say the dove-cote ground has been dug over and nothing left of the buried articles.'

"When Mr. Pitkin's body was recovered, it was found in a pit with nine others, bodies of Chinese whom he had loved. . . . Pitkin's hands were not bound, but uplifted as if in prayer, in which position they became rigid."

—R. E. Speer: *A Memorial of Horace Tracy Pitkin.*

STUDY VI.—Persecution Scatters the Witnesses Throughout Judæa and Samaria. 8:1-40

FIRST DAY: PERSECUTION IN JERUSALEM. 8:1-4

Read 8:1-4 and compare it with 1:8. "They have stoned Stephen!" was an exclamation which, as it passed from Nazarene to Nazarene, sent husbands home to their wives, and mothers to their children. The experience of the sanhedrin with Stephen was like the taste of blood to a tiger. A furious persecution began. Note its leader. With a promptness that was characteristic of him, he began that very day (v. 1). His age is indicated in 7:58. Read 22:3 to see what had brought him to Jerusalem. Note his description of himself in the autobiographical passage, Gal. 1:13-14. The fury of the persecution is indicated by the fact that it involved house-to-house search and did not spare women, who had from the beginning been prominently connected with the movement. Great numbers moved away from the city to escape danger. Why did the apostles stay in the city?

In spite of the persecutor's fury, certain persons called "devout men" took up Stephen's bruised and bloody corpse, and gave it formal burial. They even made unusual lamentation over it. If they were Christian Jews they may have been called specially "devout" because of their fearlessness. Consider the question which must come up again soon:—Why was Saul so violently opposed to the Nazarenes?

"They, therefore, that were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word" (v. 4). Many of these doubtless, like Philip, had been, in a sense, professional preachers in Jerusalem, but many others were commonplace Nazarenes. We need to take pains not to lose our sense of having been entrusted with a definite message which we are to deliver in all wise and tactful ways, wherever we may be. The individual Christian is a propagating center.

Chapters 3-8, A. D. 30-34 (Zahn).

Study VI.—Persecution Scatters the Witnesses Throughout Judæa and Samaria. 8:1-40

Second Day: The Testimony in Samaria. 8:5-8

Read 8:5-8. Some of the witnesses who fled from Jerusalem did not stop until they reached distant places (9:2; 11:19). The author concentrates attention upon one of them, whose work was interesting because he began to widen the circle of those who might hear the testimony. The work in Samaria was the beginning of a broader policy. It was, however, only a beginning, for the Samaritans, though cordially hated by the Jews (cf. John 4:9), seem to be regarded in the Talmud as half-breed Jews, or as semi-proselytes, rather than as foreigners. They had Jewish blood in their veins. Read the account of their origin in 2 Kings 17:23-33. They worshiped Jehovah; expected the Messiah (cf. John 4:25); possessed the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures and consequently practised circumcision and performed the sacrifices of the Levitical system. Jesus preached among them (John 4:39-42) and probably John the Baptist (John 3:23; 4:37-38). Yet there was plenty of ill-feeling between Jews and Samaritans, for the Samaritans rejected all the Hebrew scriptures except the books of Moses, they would not worship at Jerusalem, and they constituted a convenient asylum to which any Jew who became an unpopular citizen in either Judæa or Galilee might resort with safety (Josephus, *Antiquities* 11:8:7). Imagine how a city full of Samaritans, expectant of a Messiah, and knowing by hearsay about the opposition of the Jewish priests to the new Messianic movement in Jerusalem, would receive a fugitive witness. Was this Philip the apostle of that name or Stephen's colleague (6:5)? Why was there so "much joy in that city"?

The Nazarene in Jerusalem who was being dragged along the stony street to prison probably had very little sense of being serviceable to the cause. Yet we, as we look back upon the entire situation and its outcome, see that, in the great forward step that was being taken, his contribution was as real as was that of Philip, standing flushed with the glad sense of success in the midst of the enthusiastic crowds of the Samaritan capital.

Study VI.—Persecution Scatters the Witnesses Throughout Judæa and Samaria. 8:1-40

Third Day: The Conspicuous Success of the Testimony in Samaria. 8:9-13

Read 8:9-13. Luke vividly emphasizes the widely influential character of Philip's work by noting that even a certain Simon, a magian, who had for a long time (v. 11) been entrenched in the esteem of all classes (v. 10) of the entire nation (v. 9) was himself, together with all his admirers, swept into Philip's following (v. 13). The magians must have been interesting men. Their character is well described by Professor Ramsay in *St. Paul, the Traveler and Roman Citizen:* "The magian represented in his single personality both the modern fortune-teller and the modern man of science; and he had a religious as well as merely superstitious aspect to the outer world." The astrologer of the Middle Ages was the ancestor of both the modern astronomer and the modern fortune-teller. The "wise men" of Matt. 2:1 were "magians" evidently of a superior class. What evidence is there here in Acts that this Samaritan magian had some religious significance in the eyes of the people?

What was probably the substance of Philip's preaching to these people? That is, what did he probably have to say about the Kingdom of God that would be regarded as good tidings (v. 12)? And what did he probably say about the "name of Jesus Christ"? What did Simon "believe" (v. 13)? It is evidently regarded by Luke as a significant evidence of God's power that Philip should be able to do things that could make a magian like Simon stand by in blank amazement (v. 13).

"And there was much joy in that city" (v. 8). Wherever there is a distinct experience of release from evil habit through the power of Jesus Christ there is real joy. Is your habitual mood such as to convince an acquaintance, who has no Christian experience, that you have in your life a source of real joy that is lacking in his?

Study VI.—Persecution Scatters the Witnesses Throughout Judæa and Samaria. 8:1-40

Fourth Day: God's Endorsement of the Samaritan Work. 8:14-25

Some of the Jerusalem believers may have questioned whether God would approve this extension of the testimony beyond the strictly Jewish circle. There had been as yet no such signal endorsement as the Jerusalem believers had experienced on the day of Pentecost. Believers had simply, in the baptismal rite, confessed their allegiance to Jesus as Messianic "Lord," and joined the company of those who looked for His return to establish God's Kingdom. Recently discovered papyri make it evident that in the eastern world the word Lord ("kyrios") in such connections as this connoted divinity. Read vv. 14-18, picturing the scene phrase by phrase. Evidently there were some visible phenomena, such as could be perceived by the magian. What do you imagine them to have been? Had they had no vital connection with the Holy Spirit during the time between their baptism and the arrival of the apostles? The magian recognized that the two apostles from Jerusalem were Philip's superiors, and he made the naïve proposition that these two masters, for a money consideration, teach him how to add this accomplishment to his repertoire of sorceries. Read vv. 18-24. Why should Peter have been so indignant? What was the real difficulty with the magian?

Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching in many villages on the way. Note the significant word Luke uses to describe their preaching (v. 25).

The person who has long been deceiving others finally deceives himself. He who has long been blunting the moral perceptions of others finally finds his own almost hopelessly blunt when he most needs to have them keen.

Study VI.—Persecution Scatters the Witnesses Throughout Judæa and Samaria. 8:1-40

Fifth Day: A Eunuch Accepts the Testimony. 8:26-40

The incident in this paragraph is evidently regarded by Luke as constituting a forward step in the process of carrying the gospel from Jew to Gentile. And yet at first glance it is difficult to see just what advance is here made. Read the whole paragraph, vv. 26-40, and see whether you can determine just what the forward step is.

Luke does not seem to regard the man as a Gentile, for he certainly regards the Roman captain, Cornelius (chap. 10), as the first Gentile to receive the testimony. Read 15:7 as corroboration. A Jew, resident in Ethiopia, would be called an Ethiopian (cf. 2:5, 9). If he were a full proselyte of Judaism, his case would be exactly like that of a Jew and would constitute no advance on what had preceded. We have already met Jewish proselytes among the Nazarenes (6:5).

Considerable light is thrown on the situation when it is remembered that two classes of people are mentioned together in the prophecy of Isaiah as not naturally eligible for admission to the Messianic kingdom. One of these classes Luke is about to take up in chapter 10, with great emphasis upon the significance of its admission into the new movement, namely, Gentiles that live among the Jews and worship Jehovah, but that do not become Jewish proselytes. The other class, closely associated with them as not naturally eligible for the new kingdom, is eunuchs. In Deuteronomy 23:1 the prejudice against eunuchs is expressed, and in Isaiah 56:1-8 eunuchs and God-fearing foreigners are classed together as ineligibles for whom provision will nevertheless be made. Read the passage in Isaiah. It is reasonably clear that the inclusion of a eunuch would seem to Luke a decisive forward step.

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

—Faber.

Study VI.—Persecution Scatters the Witnesses Throughout Judæa and Samaria. 8:1-40

Sixth Day: A Eunuch Accepts the Testimony (*Continued*). 8:26-40

Luke lays emphasis on the fact that God arranged the meeting between the witness and the eunuch. In the midst of Philip's exhilarating success in Samaria he found himself, probably in a vision of the night, bidden to go some scores of miles southward to the Jerusalem-Gaza trunk-road, in a sparsely settled, "desert" section where he was not likely to find many to evangelize. The time of his starting was designated, for the phrase translated "toward the south" may be translated "about noon." So he left his wife and little daughters (cf. 21:8-9) and went on his lonely way down through the foot-hills into the Philistine plain, wondering why he had been sent.

As he drew near the trunk-road he saw in the distance a chariot and attendants suitable to the needs of a man of rank. In obedience to an impulse which he regarded as produced by the Holy Spirit (v. 29), he ran to join the company and found in what followed abundant evidence that God had planned the meeting. The gentleman in the chariot had come many hundreds of miles from the Abyssinian plateau to celebrate in Jerusalem some feast of the Jewish calendar, and was now whiling away the long hours by reading aloud (v. 30) from a roll which contained the prophecy of Isaiah. He had evidently just finished our fifty-second chapter, and his memory of the beautiful temple he had just left was merging with visions of the city's future Messianic glory. He had come abruptly upon the strange minor note of the fifty-third chapter. Read Isaiah 52:1—53:9, trying to put yourself in the traveler's place.

Philip recognized the passage as one regarded by the Nazarenes as Messianic, and inquired whether it could possibly be that the gentleman understood its meaning. Why should such a gentleman be so ready to ask instruction from a chance pedestrian by the roadside?

It must have given Philip an exhilarating sense of cooperating with the unseen God to find himself the object of such evident superintendence. If we were steadily looking out for opportunities to call the attention of men to Jesus Christ very probably we should find ourselves evidently working together with God.

Study VI.—Persecution Scatters the Witnesses Throughout Judæa and Samaria. 8:1-40

Seventh Day: A Eunuch Accepts the Testimony (*Concluded*). 8:26-40

The eunuch may have heard in Jerusalem of the new Messianic movement, and may have known that Nazarene refugees were scattered over the countryside. He may easily have inferred that this eager pedestrian was one of them. Philip probably spoke at once of the death of Jesus, for the next sentence in the Greek translation of Isaiah, which the eunuch was probably using, reads: "By the lawless ones of my people was he brought to death." Philip would emphasize the non-resistance of Jesus before His enemies, the fact that in His period of humiliation His power of Messianic judgment was held in abeyance and that He left no descendants. Read vv. 32-35. Philip also probably called attention to the providential circumstances that had led to their meeting. It is evident from v. 36 that he had spoken of belief and baptism. After the baptism Philip felt himself constrained by the Holy Spirit to hurry away (v. 39). The eunuch in gladness of heart turned back to his roll and read Isaiah 52:7 with new sense of its meaning.

It may have been some years later that Philip settled in Cæsarea (v. 40). Note in 21:8-10 the opportunity that Luke had to get first-hand information regarding the events described here in the eighth chapter.

Regarding this incident as an illustration of the way in which the Christian movement is extended, what persons, influences or agencies appear to be operative in such extension?

"The Spirit said unto Philip, 'Go near' . . . and Philip ran to him" (vv. 29-30). He was a ready witness into whom God's Spirit could think a thought with the assurance that it would be so instantly transmuted into action as to make the witness an incarnate volition of the living God. Successful living consists in being, without strain or worry, always quietly ready for an emergency. Could you at a moment's notice tell a man, who was ready to learn, exactly what it is to become a Christian?

Study VII.—Jesus Selects a Great Witness for the Foreign World. 9:1-31

First Day: Rabbi Saul's Early History

Luke's chief interest in describing the remarkable transformation of life experienced by Rabbi Saul appears in 9:15. Turn also to 26:16-18, noting incidentally the emphasis there laid upon the idea of "witnessing."

Some facts about his early history are of significance. He was a city-bred man (22:3), and the city of his birth was one of the three great university centers of the world, the other two being Athens and Alexandria. It is scarcely probable that his boyhood was much influenced by Greek learning, for his father, grandfather and possibly his ancestors still further back belonged to the anti-foreign element of the nation. In 23:6 he proudly calls himself a son of Pharisees. In his early home life the family seem to have kept up their speaking use of "Hebrew" (Aramaic), although many Jewish families who lived outside Palestine ceased to use their national language. Notice the evidence of this in Paul's brief autobiographical sketch (Phil. 3:5) and note the effective use he made of his ability to speak Hebrew (Acts 21:40—22:2). Note also 26:14. The family sent him at an early age back to Palestine and proposed to give him the best possible opportunity to become a great rabbi. See 22:3; 26:4-5. He felt that he made the most of his advantages. See Gal. 1:14. He was always passionately loyal to his nation, though for years he had to suffer the unjust reproach that he was a renegade Jew. Read his protest in Rom. 9:1-5. Yet the family possessed Roman citizenship. See Acts 22:25-29.

One needs to remember that features of his life that seem to be of no particular significance may turn out to be of great value in the future. He needs to be sure that God is always at work shaping his life.

Study VII.—Jesus Selects a Great Witness for the Foreign World. 9:1-31

Second Day: Rabbi Saul, the Persecutor. 9:1-2

When the Jewish authorities determined to stamp out the Nazarene heresy God seemed to them to have raised up a man for the hour, the young Tarsian, Rabbi Saul. He was a person of great energy, determination and unflinching executive ability. He was thoroughly convinced that the heresy must be stopped. Read his comment on this period of his life made many years later (26:9-11). It seemed to Saul that Jesus had been an enemy of Pharisaism and its high aims for the religious life of the nation. Jesus' attitude toward the Pharisaic interpretation of the scriptures had been critical, and His conduct in associating with outcast classes had seemed to the Pharisees to be irreligious. God had openly and unmistakably cursed Him, for He had hung in naked shame on a cross between two brigands. Now the fanatical Nazarenes dare to assert that the blasphemer is on the right hand of God and will soon return as Messianic Lord! Worst of all, they are leading the people to think lightly of law and temple. Stephen had been a flagrant illustration of their destructive tendency. So Rabbi Saul steals in upon groups of Nazarenes gathered at night-time for prayer. He "breathes out threatening and slaughter" whenever he sees a Nazarene. He shouts in the synagogue: "Curse Jesus, or we will kill you" (26:11).

When the Nazarenes had been pretty thoroughly scattered from Jerusalem, Saul, with characteristic largeness of purpose, proposed to visit the ghetto of every great city in the empire and stamp the movement utterly out. The Jews in foreign cities were always in danger of yielding to the worldly influence of their environment and becoming lax in their observance of the law. If now this Nazarene movement should develop within the ghetto itself, the peril would be great.

Read vv. 1-2. What propriety do you see in calling Nazarenes men of "the way"?

Have imagination enough to think habitually of the worst man you know as transformed into a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Study VII.—Jesus Selects a Great Witness for the Foreign World. 9:1-31

Third Day: Rabbi Saul's Interview with Jesus. 9:3-9

Joseph Caiaphas, the priest, smiled approvingly upon Rabbi Saul as he gave him his credentials (v. 2). This troublesome Nazarene movement seemed likely now to be wholly overthrown! Rabbi Saul took with him a detachment of men to serve as guards for the captives who should return to Jerusalem with him, and began his ride of 120 miles to Damascus. When he was almost at his destination, about noon, a blazing blinding light, outshining the hot Syrian sun, fell upon them. Rabbi Saul found himself on the ground and heard a voice calling him by no title, but by the personal name in the form in which he had heard it in his mother's arms (26:14). The name went sounding down, down, down into the depths of his soul. The voice asks him why he persecutes the speaker. Is it the cry of the last Nazarene martyr murdered in Jerusalem still ringing in his ears? Is it the unforgettable voice of Stephen of the angel face? He asks: "Who are you, sir?" After a moment of suspense comes an answer, the first effect of which must have been to horrify him and nearly stop the beating of his heart: "I am Jesus"! With quiet authority Jesus began to exercise control, and Rabbi Saul began the long life of obedience in which his chief glory was to confess himself Jesus Christ's bond-slave (cf. Rom. 1:1). When Rabbi Saul rose up he found himself unable longer to persecute. Instead of dashing into the ghetto with terrifying prestige, he was led in as a helpless, groping, blind man. Read carefully vv. 3-9 and consider at such length as your time permits, these questions: What actually happened to Rabbi Saul at this time? What immediate changes in his religious life and conduct were logically necessitated by this experience?

"So sometimes comes to soul and sense
The feeling which is evidence
That very near about us lies
The realm of spiritual mysteries.
The sphere of the supernal powers
Impinges on this world of ours."

—Whittier: *The Meeting.*

A. D. 35 (Zahn); A. D. 30 (Harnack); A. D. 33 (32) (Ramsay).

Study VII.—Jesus Selects a Great Witness for the Foreign World. 9:1-31

Fourth Day: Jesus Sends One of the Brothers to Rabbi Saul. 9:10-19

Rabbi Saul was conducted to the residence of some leader of the ghetto who was doubtless prepared to entertain suitably the distinguished representative of the Jerusalem sanhedrin. The Jerusalem rabbi was a strange guest! Read v. 9. By and by he fell asleep and dreamed that he saw a man named Ananias come in, speak to him, and restore his sight. He awoke and found it only a dream. He was a blind man still! Then he heard steps. A visitor was announced, and the servant pronounced the name "Ananias." Rabbi Saul felt friendly hands laid on him, heard a voice say, "Brother Saul," and in Jesus' name bid him see again. He suddenly found himself looking into the face of a fellow Nazarene, a devout Pharisee like himself (22:12). He received from his visitor the rite that inducted him into the new fraternity and took his place among those whom he had come to persecute.

Read carefully vv. 10-18. Why mention the fact that Saul was praying (v. 11)? Had he not prayed before? What thoughts were probably uppermost in Saul's mind during the three days of blindness? Saul knows how those who "bear the name before Israel" have to suffer (vv. 15-16).

This experience on the Damascus road always afterward seemed to Saul a real interview with Jesus. He recognized the fact that he sometimes had trance-like visions (2 Cor. 12:1-4), but this Damascus experience he evidently differentiated from such visions, for he classified it with the appearances of Jesus to the original disciples in the days immediately after the resurrection. Read 1 Cor. 15:4-8. The effect of the experience on the character of Saul, its results in the life of the early church through Saul's missionary activity, and its ever-enlarging influence in the modern world through Saul's literary productions, all make it highly reasonable to suppose that the Spirit of Jesus met the spirit of Saul and presumably in such a way as to produce certain effects in Saul's physical environment.

The experience of Saul and the experience of Ananias give hints as to the way in which Jesus spends His time. He is working upon the lives of men none the less really because less conspicuously than in the cases of Ananias and Saul.

Study VII.—Jesus Selects a Great Witness for the Foreign World. 9:1-31

Fifth Day: Rabbi Saul Begins to Witness. 9:19-25

Saul probably left the house on Straight street and became the guest of some Nazarene, perhaps Ananias. He at once visited the synagogue, where his reputation as a distinguished rabbi from Jerusalem brought him at first large audiences. Read vv. 19-22, in order to ascertain what his main contention was. How did he "prove" his point?

At about this period in Saul's history something occurred which seemed of importance to him. Read his autobiographical allusion to it in Gal. 1:15-17. It is uncertain whether he meant by "Arabia" the Sinaitic peninsula or some region near Damascus. At certain periods of history the term Arabia included even Damascus itself. Whether he stayed in Arabia longer than a few weeks or months is also uncertain. Gal. 1:18 does not make this clear. Certainly he would have needed physical rest after the nervous shock involved in the blinding vision. He would have needed also time for a thoughtful readjustment of his religious views to his new experience. Is it probable that he could have written such an epistle as that to the Romans a few months after his Damascus experience?

He returned from Arabia to Damascus (Gal. 1:17) and soon began to see angry faces in his audiences, like those that Stephen had seen in the Jerusalem synagogues. Some fanatics of the ghetto plotted to assassinate him, and for a time by day and night men were lurking about the city gates with daggers under their cloaks. Read vv. 23-25. Is there any evidence in 2 Cor. 11:30-33 that the authorities of the ghetto enlisted the city police in their effort to dispose of Saul? The passage just cited (especially v. 30) reads somewhat as if Saul were ridiculed for the undignified manner of his escape.

Saul's testimony was based on his personal experience. There is much value in the historic facts connected with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to which we can call attention, but the gist of our testimony must be some personal experience interpreted in the light of these historic facts.

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Study VII.—Jesus Selects a Great Witness for the Foreign World. 9:1-31

Sixth Day: Rabbi Saul Returns to Jerusalem as a Christian Witness. 9:26-30

For two reasons Saul wished to revisit Jerusalem. The first is stated by himself in Gal. 1:18. His remarkable experience with Jesus had convinced him that Jesus meant him to be an apostle (read 1 Cor. 9:1). If he was an apostle, it was extremely desirable that he should come to an understanding with the other apostles and especially with their leader, Peter, and arrange with them some plan for work. One wonders whether the ex-fisherman and the rabbi, so similarly forceful in character, but different in training, found each other congenial. At a later period they came into collision (cf. Gal. 2:11-14), and if the author of our second epistle of Peter was the apostle, there is indication that the fisherman found difficulty in following the train of thought in some of the rabbi's letters (2 Peter 3:15-16).

A second reason why Saul wished to revisit Jerusalem is implied in an account given long afterward by Saul of his experience at prayer in the temple during the time of his visit. Read Acts 22:17-21. Saul hoped that he could lead a large company of his old Jerusalem friends among the rabbis into the Nazarene ranks. It seemed to him that they would surely be convinced by his experience that the Christian contention was just.

Read now the account of his visit in 9:26-30 and see how disappointing it was. After two short weeks (Gal. 1:18) the visit came to an abrupt end.

If they did not believe that Saul was a genuine disciple (v. 26), what did they think was his reason for pretending to be one? Barnabas and Saul probably had had some previous acquaintance. Notice that Saul's antagonists were from the same class that had furnished Stephen's enemies (cf. 6:9). Do you see any reason for making Tarsus his destination? These two weeks were probably weeks of rapid growth in Saul's religious life. From James, the brother of Jesus, he had opportunity to learn many things about the personal life of the Nazareth family (Gal. 1:19). From Peter he learned much about the public life and teaching of Jesus, although the characteristic features of his own presentation of the gospel, he always

regarded as a divine gift not brought to him through any human teacher (Gal. 1:11-12).

He had opportunity also to recall the shameful record of his persecuting fury, to visit once more the spot where he had stood exulting over the fate of Stephen.

He began to see also how much he had sacrificed in becoming a Nazarene. His former teacher, Gamaliel, probably received him coldly. His associates among the rabbis cast him utterly off. His father probably disinherited him and made him feel that such a result of all the money expended upon his education was bitterly disappointing. When Saul finally got safely off on shipboard at Cæsarea, bound for Tarsus, he had leisure to count up his losses—family, friends, property, professional ambitions—everything was gone. He could say, as he did later, "I have suffered the loss of all things." Read Phil. 3:4-11.

But in these two weeks Saul was learning to take on his heart the burden of the great Gentile world. He had a Pharisee's contempt for Gentiles. He could not in a week nor in a year take upon him his share of his Lord's interest in the Gentiles. Jesus gradually put the burden on him. In his trance in some quiet corner of the temple colonnades they argued about it (22:17-21). Saul said: "I want to stay here in the city. Here surely is to be my first and great work, here among the rabbis and these choice people of Jerusalem." "But, Saul," said Jesus in the vision, "the Gentiles, the Gentiles! I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles!" The great world was the burden that lay upon the heart of Jesus—Corinth and Ephesus and Rome, their slums and their hordes of despairing slaves. These were weeks in which Saul began to share his Lord's interest in the great Gentile world, to be the apostle of which finally became his chief joy and glory.

Jesus' concern to-day is for the great world ignorant of Him and His ideals; for its great cities in China and India, their narrow streets filled with men and women, their little children growing up in lust and brutality. It is not with Him simply a matter of personal pride, an ambition to see the enterprise He began succeed, but He feels the same great personal concern for the people themselves, for the men, women and children. Have you ever solemnly consecrated your life to the effort to secure for all men a fair chance at all good things?

Study VII.—Jesus Selects a Great Witness for the Foreign World. 9:1-31

Seventh Day: Summary of Part II. 9:31

Think to-day for a few moments once more of Saul's interview with Jesus. Saul was soon ready to sacrifice everything else for a more intimate acquaintance with Jesus (Phil. 3:8-10). What personal qualities in Jesus did Saul find so attractive? That is, what great characteristics of Jesus appear in this interview?

Note also to-day the progress in the development of the main purpose of the book that has been made in Part II. Compare 9:31 with 1:8. Persecution has abated and the Nazarenes are rapidly increasing in number throughout Judæa, Galilee and Samaria. Note Luke's emphasis of the relation of the Holy Spirit to the movement.

"Paul is the most luminous personality in the history of primitive Christianity. . . . In the opinion of the great majority of those who have studied him . . . he was the one who understood the Master and continued His work. . . . We regard him as Christ's disciple, as the apostle who not only worked harder, but also accomplished more than all the rest put together. It was Paul who delivered the Christian religion from Judaism."

—Harnack: *What Is Christianity?*

PART III

THE TESTIMONY IS BORNE BY GOD'S DIRECTION FOR THE FIRST TIME TO JEHOVAH-WORSHIPING FOREIGNERS. 9:32—12:24

STUDY VIII.—Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners in Cæsarea Receive the Testimony. 9:32—11:18.

STUDY IX.—A New Christian Center Among Foreigners in Syrian Antioch and a Startling Demonstration in the Old Center. 11:19—12:24.

Study VIII.—Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners in Cæsarea Receive the Testimony. 9:32—11:18

First Day: Peter and the Church Prepared for a Forward Movement. 9:32-43

Luke is now ready to describe with great fullness of detail the first approach to foreigners, and before doing so he introduces again, in an impressive preliminary paragraph, the person who is to be the chief actor. Peter ever after regarded the experience which he was now unconsciously approaching as one of the most important of his life. See how he alludes to it in 15:7. For an experience so important the chief actor would require preparation, and an account of this preparation is given in 9:32-43. Read the paragraph, and state how the experience recorded was calculated to prepare Peter for the forward step he was soon to take. That is, put yourself in Peter's place and imagine what would have been the effect of these two experiences upon him.

Peter had left Jerusalem and was now visiting groups of Nazarenes in all parts of the country. Perhaps in all these communities he was already teaching his collection of instructive anecdotes about Jesus, which seem to have been later set in order by his assistant, John Mark, and which, so arranged, are probably preserved in our Gospel of Mark. He is also exercising the same healing power in these country churches for which he had been famous in Jerusalem (cf. 5:15-16). Among Peter's anecdotes concerning Jesus' healing power was the one preserved for us in Mark 2:1-12. Read it and compare it with the somewhat similar experience of Peter with a palsied man here in vv. 32-35. What differences do you note in the method of procedure in the two cases? What was Peter's inner experience as he faced the paralytic? What inner experience enabled him to say, "Jesus Christ is healing thee" (v. 34)?

Here is a man so intimately associated with Jesus Christ as to raise men out of helplessness and set them at work (v. 34). Our ability to help men morally to their feet is in proportion to the closeness of our alliance with Jesus Christ.

Chapters 9:32-11:24, 27; A. D. 38-40 (Zahn).

Study VIII.—Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners in Cæsarea Receive the Testimony. 9:32—11:18

Second Day: Peter and the Church Prepared for a Forward Movement (*Concluded*). 9:32-43

Peter's spiritual experience of Jesus' nearness to him in Lydda was intensified by a more remarkable experience in Joppa. There, too, he found himself in a situation similar to one in which he, with two other disciples, had seen Jesus exhibit remarkable power. Read Mark 5:35-43, and compare it with vv. 36-42 here in Acts. What similarities and differences do you note in the method of procedure in the two cases? Through what psychological process do you conceive Peter's mind to have passed in this experience?

It was not Peter alone who needed preparation for the forward step to be described in the next chapter, but the entire body of Nazarenes. We can scarcely imagine how the Jewish sense of decency would be outraged by such intercourse with foreigners as Peter was soon to have with Cornelius. (Read 11:1-3.) This shock must have been greatly mitigated by God's evident endorsement of Peter on the verge of this experience. It was particularly advantageous to have this endorsement given in communities so strongly Jewish as were Lydda and Joppa. Palestine was largely influenced by Greek civilization. Many towns had a large Gentile element in their population (cf. Matt. 10:5), but these two towns were strongly Jewish. The occurrences in these two cities influenced not only the cities themselves, but also the surrounding country. This fact is especially emphasized in the case of Lydda. All the Jews in the plain of "The Sharon" became Christians (v. 35).

It was while Peter was going regularly about "throughout all parts" that he "came down also" to the emergencies in Lydda and Joppa, and then into the great opportunity in Caesarea. To the man in close touch with God the commonplace routine, which is a product of the infinite ingenuity of God, may lead at any moment into the emergency and the unusual opportunity.

Study VIII.—Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners in Cæsarea Receive the Testimony. 9:32—11:18

Third Day: God Prepares a Jehovah-Worshiping Gentile to Receive the Testimony. 10:1-8

The Jews were shrewd business men, as they are to-day, and Palestine was a poor country for business enterprises. Consequently the Jews in large numbers had left Palestine and settled in the great business centers of the world. They carried their religion with them and its central institution, the synagogue. In many of these synagogues on the Sabbath there might have been seen in the audience, perhaps seated by themselves, a group of Gentiles. They were not Jewish proselytes, but persons who, weary of the pagan religions, had been attracted by the monotheism and higher ethical standards of the Jewish faith. They did not care to make the political and social sacrifice involved in becoming Jewish proselytes, but they worshiped Jehovah, and probably to some extent adapted their social and domestic life to Jewish standards, else their presence in the synagogue would not have been tolerated. They are called, in the book of Acts, "devout persons" or "those that fear God."

The more conservative Jews probably had no social intercourse with these Gentile worshipers. Some were less conservative, for we know that a pious Jewess in South Galatia allowed her daughter to marry one of them. (See Acts 16:1-3; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15.) No one, however, seems to have supposed that these Jehovah-worshiping Gentiles could have any share in the coming "kingdom of God."

It was these Jehovah-worshiping foreigners who were destined to be the first foreigners to receive the testimony. With these facts in mind, read 10:1-8. Note the "devout" person who is mentioned, in addition to the captain's family. Probably there were others like him in the cohort. Note on the map the location of Cæsarea and Joppa. Cæsarea was as thoroughly Gentile as Joppa was Jewish.

It is in the leisure and mood of the prayer hour that God finds opportunity to draw near to the soul with His message (vv. 9, 30).

Study VIII.—Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners in Cæsarea Receive the Testimony. 9:32—11:18

Fourth Day: God Prepares Peter to Testify Before a Jehovah-Worshiping Gentile. 10:9-23

The day after the captain's vision in Cæsarea, Peter in Joppa is on the oriental house-top, in the seclusion afforded by its protecting rampart, for noonday prayer. He can look out upon the blue Mediterranean, with its white-sailed ships. As he is praying he has a vision in which a great sail, or sheet, filled with strange contents is lowered from the blue sky. A voice from the sky commands Peter to do something against which his religious nature, trained for many years to regard certain foods as religiously defiling, revolts. Read carefully vv. 9-16. Was there anything significant to Peter in the place from which these "unclean" animals came and into which they were received?

While Peter was wondering what the significance of his strange vision could be, he heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the pavement below, and was seized with a conviction that he was wanted there. Read vv. 17-22.

Peter lodged the three Gentiles without scruples, and the next morning, with six Jewish Christians from Joppa, whom he took along to be witnesses of whatever God might be going to do, he began the ride to Cæsarea. The ten men reached Cæsarea about three p. m. (v. 30) of the next day. Read vv. 22-23.

If you have a little money to invest and have a friend who does business in a large way, that brings many chances for profitable investment constantly before him, you call on him often if he enjoys having you do so. When you call on him, you listen to him.

So when you come before God every day, listen to Him. The spiritual industries of the world are open before Him. He has a future for you, some broader outlook to give you, some chance for the investment of yourself that you have not yet begun to realize.

Study VIII.—Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners in Cæsarea Receive the Testimony. 9:32—11:18

Fifth Day: Peter's Testimony Before the Italian Captain and His Friends. 10:24-43

When the group of horsemen reached the captain's residence, the captain came out in person to meet them, and Peter had the extremely novel experience of being greeted by a Roman with a prolonged salaam. He politely protested, and then—with a strange sensation—perhaps for the first time in his life, crossed the threshold of a foreigner's house. The captain, talking to him as they walked through the atrium, presented him to a group of gentlemen composed of the captain's kinsmen and military friends. Peter and Cornelius gave an account of the remarkable experiences they had passed through during the past few days, and then Peter began his testimony. Read vv. 24-34. What was probably the attitude of Cornelius' kinsmen and friends to the Jewish religion? How did they happen to be assembled at just this hour?

Read Peter's address in vv. 35-43, and note whether it contains any new ideas. In addresses to Jewish audiences Peter seems to have made his appeal to the conscience in connection with the charge that they had killed God's Messiah. This charge he is not able to make here. What takes its place here as an appeal to conscience?

This great leader of the Nazarenes was learning, what others since from time to time have had to learn, namely, that God proposes to save a larger number than men have expected to see saved. Men give up their fellowmen far sooner than God does. Are there any persons in your circle of acquaintances, whom you never think of as possibly becoming Christians? Do you habitually think of every person you meet as one meant by God to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

STUDY VIII.—Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners in Cæsarea Receive the Testimony. 9:32—11:18

SIXTH DAY: GOD APPROVES THE PRESENTATION OF THE TESTIMONY TO JEHOVAH-WORSHIPING GENTILES. 10:34-48

Peter in his first sentence acknowledged his change of view-point. He recognized that any Jehovah-worshiping Gentile who lived such a life as that of Cornelius was "acceptable" to God, that is, might have a chance to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus and begin to look for the coming kingdom (v. 35). He used the familiar doxology with a new sense of its breadth of application (v. 36). Peter assumed that these gentlemen were familiar with the history of the Nazarene movement (v. 37). Cæsarea was a natural outlet for Nazarenes leaving the country by sea. In all probability some of them had spoken in the Cæsarean synagogue, but no one had dreamed that their message could be one of good news to any except Jews.

What features in the character and life of Jesus seem to have impressed Peter most strongly?

Peter found it pertinent to the situation of these Jehovah-worshiping Gentiles to assure them that Jesus was the one in whom were fulfilled the prophecies that they were accustomed to hear read in the synagogue from Sabbath to Sabbath (v. 43).

It was reasonably clear to all concerned that God had brought this witness to the captain's house, but all doubt was removed when certain well-known signs of agitation began to appear in the audience. Read vv. 44-48. What is Peter's argument? How do you account for the fact that the Jews were so narrow-minded as v. 45 indicates?

God's love is like the tide of the sea as it enters the harbor, ready to lift all the shipping—the great ocean liner and the multitude of smaller craft, the millionaire's palatial private yacht and the old garbage scow.

"He findeth not who seeks his own,
The soul is lost that's saved alone.
Not on one favored forehead fell
Of old the fire-tongued miracle,
But flamed o'er all the thronging host
The baptism of the Holy Ghost."

—WHITTIER: *The Meeting*

Study VIII.—Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners in Cæsarea Receive the Testimony. 9:32—11:18

Seventh Day: The Jerusalem Believers Endorse the Forward Movement. 11:1-18

The attitude of the Jerusalem church toward Gentiles was evidently that of all orthodox Jews. According to the Talmud, the "heathen had fallen away from the service of God, had lost human nature, and been transformed into animal nature, so that they were morally and physically unclean." "God could not speak through their consciences." "If they should repent of their sins they would receive no forgiveness." "It was not God's purpose to have heathen in His kingdom unless by circumcision they became Jews." (Weber: *Die Lehren des Talmud.*) Doubtless there were Jews who would not have subscribed to some of these statements, but the statements probably expressed the general attitude toward the Gentile.

The Jews felt that physical contact could produce moral contamination, and therefore avoided, as far as possible, all association with Gentiles. Particularly in entering a Gentile's house they ran risk of polluting themselves (cf. John 18:28). To eat at a Gentile's table was a most flagrant offense because, in addition to the fellowship involved in the simple act of eating together, there was the certainty that the Gentile did not regard the distinction between clean and unclean foods, and would very likely even have something on his table that had come from the pagan temple. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10:27-28.) The most scandalous feature of Peter's conduct in Cæsarea was not his preaching to Gentiles, but his eating with them.

Read 11:1-18. Did Luke see any significance in the time at which the Holy Spirit "fell on" these Gentile believers (10:44; 11:15)? What are the strong points in Peter's defense of his action? What is the meaning of the last statement in v. 18?

These Jerusalem Christians were slowly solving the difficult problem of holding loyally to what they had always supposed to be God's truth, and at the same time yielding candid consideration and hearty acceptance to new revelations of God's truth, which at first sight seemed inconsistent with the old. That the Spirit of God patiently guided them in this critical period is the comfort of all those who find themselves similarly situated.

Study IX.—A New Christian Center Among Foreigners in Syrian Antioch and a Startling Demonstration in the Old Center. 11:19—12:24

First Day: Large Numbers of Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners Become Christians in Syrian Antioch. 11:19-30

Read vv. 19-21, noting on the map the places from which the preachers came and to which they went. In v. 20 some manuscripts read "Greeks," as is indicated in the American Revised Version, and others "Grecian Jews." The context seems to require the conclusion that the persons indicated were Jehovah-worshiping Gentiles.

New ideas and inventions seem frequently to appear almost simultaneously in the minds of persons far removed from, and wholly independent of, each other. At about the time when Peter brought the testimony to Cornelius, venturesome spirits, originally from North Africa and the island of Cyprus, dared to address their testimony to the Jehovah-worshiping Gentiles whom they found in the synagogues of Antioch on the Orontes. We do not know how these nameless pioneers of Christian liberty came to do as they did in Antioch. Jews had enjoyed special privileges in that city, and it may be that the line of distinction between Jew and Gentile was less sharply drawn there than elsewhere. In any case the testimony was presented to the Gentiles of the synagogue and aroused great enthusiasm among them.

Read vv. 21-24, and note every point which indicates Luke's interest in showing that God approved this new departure. Luke is approaching the point in his narrative at which he will have occasion to describe the attack made by a certain Jewish minority in the Jerusalem church upon the Gentile Christians, and so takes pains to show that the original attitude of the church as a whole was favorable to the new element. Note in vv. 22-30 everything that shows friendliness between the Jerusalem and Antioch churches.

"The Lord" is the chief actor in this new beginning. It was to Him that they were "added" (v. 24) as so much working capital to be invested in the great enterprise to which He was devoting Himself.

Chapters 9:32-11:24, 27; A. D. 38-40 (Zahn).

Study IX.—A New Christian Center Among Foreigners in Syrian Antioch and a Startling Demonstration in the Old Center. 11:19—12:24

Second Day: Large Numbers of Jehovah-Worshiping Foreigners Become Christians in Syrian Antioch (*Concluded*). 11:19-30

Not the least important feature of this new work in Antioch was its contribution to the development of Saul. As the new work grew, Barnabas remembered his old friend, Rabbi Saul. He knew that, in connection with Saul's remarkable experience near Damascus, there had been significant hints that Saul was to be connected with a great turning of the Gentiles to the Messiah. How this was to be brought about probably neither Barnabas nor Saul had known. These new developments in Antioch seemed to Barnabas to throw some light on the subject. He, therefore, left Antioch for a few weeks, visited Saul in Tarsus, and described to him the situation in Antioch. Since Saul had left Jerusalem he seems to have been working quietly in Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1:21), at first exclusively among Jews, for Luke regards Peter and the Antioch preachers as the first to approach the Gentiles. He now returned to Antioch and for a year he and his friend worked together in this great church, composed of both Jewish Christians and converted Gentiles of the synagogue. In what particulars does it seem to you that this year of experience in Antioch contributed to Saul's development?

The title "Christians" (v. 26) is not one that would naturally have been assumed by the believers themselves. It seems rather to have been applied to them by outsiders who recognized that the chief interest of the believers seemed to be in one called "Christ." Would unbelieving Jews or Greeks be more likely to apply the title to them?

Probably almost all churches of any size had groups of prophets. Cf. Acts 13:2. They were men to whom messages from God came sometimes suddenly, and who were accustomed to speak in public meetings in obedience to sudden impulse. In this way they sometimes introduced confusion into the public service. Read Paul's instruction to such in 1 Cor. 14:29-33.

Does it give you such satisfaction as these Jerusalem believers evidently felt to hear that new regions are being opened to the influence of Christianity?

Chapter 11:25, A. D. 43 (Zahn).

STUDY IX.—A New Christian Center Among Foreigners in Syrian Antioch and a Startling Demonstration in the Old Center. 11:19—12:24

THIRD DAY: A STARTLING DEMONSTRATION IN JERUSALEM. 12:1-24

Before leaving Jerusalem and beginning an account of the spread of the testimony from the new center in Antioch, Luke narrates a most impressive incident in the history of the Jerusalem church. To-day read the entire section (12:1-24) and decide why Luke inserted the episode, and how it serves the main purpose of the book.

"The word of God grew and multiplied" (v. 24). There is all about us a thinking, speaking God, not one who spoke 1900 years ago, and then turned his attention to other subjects, as a man sometimes writes a book and then puts the subject out of his mind. He proposes to "multiply the word," that is, not to multiply copies of the scriptures, but to increase the number of those whose lives are such as to constitute them incarnate expressions of the thought of God, until the civilization of the Brotherly Man shall become the civilization of brotherly men and prevail in all the earth.

Study IX.—A New Christian Center Among Foreigners in Syrian Antioch and a Startling Demonstration in the Old Center. 11:19—12:24

Fourth Day: A Startling Demonstration in Jerusalem (*Continued*). 12:1-24

Begin to look at the section to-day in detail. For the first time opposition arises from the strictly civil authorities and under most interesting circumstances. King Herod, who was a grandson of the great Herod, had been brought up with the boys of the imperial household at Rome, and had acquired spendthrift habits that brought him to bankruptcy. His connection with the imperial family resulted later in his receiving Palestinian territory, and finally the title "king." At the time indicated in Acts, he was a man over fifty years of age. He had laid aside his profligate habits and was, particularly when resident in Jerusalem, a kind of amateur Pharisee.

Jerusalem was filled with thousands of bigoted Jews from all over the world who had come up to observe the Passover. They were naturally irritated by knowing that the week was being observed by the Nazarenes as the anniversary of the death and alleged resurrection of their false Christ. King Herod, seeing how obnoxious the Nazarenes were to his good friends, the Pharisees, killed a prominent Nazarene and then proceeded boldly to arrest the great apostolic leader himself. He probably knew the difficulty experienced by the sanhedrin in dealing with this heresy in the past, but was convinced that it could be disposed of in short order when once the iron hand of the civil authorities took the matter up in a businesslike fashion.

Why should God not have saved James as well as Peter? What was probably the effect of the death of James on the life of the church at this juncture, when a new campaign of extension was just about to begin (13:2)? Consider the possible effect of James' death upon the life and work of his brother John.

We have seen in our day a marvelous deliverance from death experienced by the legations and missionaries in Peking, and at the same time a terrible sacrifice of others. In the modern instance both the deliverance and the sacrifice have been on a larger scale than that of apostolic times. Perhaps they are preliminary to correspondingly greater achievements in evangelism.

STUDY IX.—A New Christian Center Among Foreigners in Syrian Antioch and a Startling Demonstration in the Old Center. 11:19—12:24

FIFTH DAY: A STARTLING DEMONSTRATION IN JERUSALEM (*Concluded*). 12:1-24

King Herod found himself dealing with forces that, with silent ease, thwarted all his precautions. Behind this movement there is an Invisible Power, which makes all opposition futile! The king cannot keep his prisoner under lock and guard! In the midst of his triumph, while the eastern sun in the open theatre falls on his glittering robes and the applause of the people fills his willing ears, a silent thrust of pain cuts short his triumph, and he is found, upon examination, to be the victim of a loathsome disease from which he dies five days later (JOSEPHUS: *Antiquities* 19:8:2). Read vv. 20-23. Is this simply a contest between an Infinite Autocrat and a finite autocrat? What are the motives that give character to the actions of each of the contestants?

With the end of this section (12:24) the first part of the history of the new movement is brought to a close. After this, starting from a new center, Syrian Antioch, a new leader will carry the testimony far afield to the great foreign world. The movement has succeeded in Syria. Its invisible Originator and Guide has proven irresistible. Priests, sanhedrin and kings go down before His invisible presence. From this point on the progress of the campaign of testimony in extra-Syrian regions will be described. Look briefly back at the steps taken in the great movement since 1:8. How many steps are there?

Underneath all of life is the unwavering will of God which bears humanity irresistibly on to its divinely appointed and glorious destiny.

Herod's death, A. D. 44.

Study IX.—A New Christian Center Among Foreigners in Syrian Antioch and a Startling Demonstration in the Old Center. 11:19—12:24

Sixth Day: The Letter of James

Before turning away from Palestine, to enter the great Roman world with Rabbi Saul, it will be interesting to glance briefly at a piece of literature which is quite commonly thought to have been produced in Jerusalem by James, the Lord's brother. According to this view of its authorship, it was probably written at about the time we have now reached in the narrative of Acts, and the picture it presents of Jewish life at this time may well be considered.

Read the following references explaining the situation of the readers addressed in this letter. They were Jewish Christians outside of Palestine (1:1), who doubtless highly esteemed the pastor of the Jerusalem church. Many of them were accustomed to see and hear him when they visited Jerusalem to attend the yearly religious feasts of the Jews. They had organized churches in which the officers were called "elders" (5:14). They were in the midst of persecution, the thought of which was uppermost in James' mind when he began to write (1:2). Their situation was so perplexing that they did not know which way to turn for counsel (1:5). They were in such distress that they were tempted, like Job, to accuse God of trying to overwhelm them (1:13-15). Their chief persecutors were the rich orthodox Jews, who had not believed in Jesus, and who were continually bringing them before the synagogue authorities (2:6), and blaspheming the Name in which the Nazarenes had been baptized (2:7, cf. Acts 2:38). These rich men employed them and kept back their wages (5:4). In all this James endeavored to encourage them by assuring them that the Lord would come to avenge them (5:7-9), and by citing the patience of their forefathers in affliction (5:10-11).

The letter presents religion as a certain kind of daily life. It is an epistle of the loving life (1:27; 2:14; 4:11). One needs constantly to remind himself that genuine religion can not consist in anything else than a daily life of unselfish thought, word, and deed.

A. D. 50 (Zahn); A. D. 130 (Harnack).

Study IX.—A New Christian Center Among Foreigners in Syrian Antioch and a Startling Demonstration in the Old Center. 11:19—12:24

Seventh Day: The Letter of James (*Concluded*)

Constant opposition, persecution, and daily debate with their unbelieving neighbors had engendered a contentious, bitter spirit. They must control their tempers and cultivate meekness (1:19-21). Their eagerness to shine in these daily debates needed rebuke (3:1), for they would, in the course of them, lose control of their tongues, and say bitter things (3:2-12). Wise men would realize that a quiet, consistent life is far more convincing than angry argument (3:13-18).

They were not free from the love of money which characterized the nation. Rich, well-dressed people that visited their Sabbath service were given better pews than those assigned to poor men (2:1-6). The bazaar men, who traveled from city to city, were absorbed in their business, and forgot the speediness with which they might be summoned to render their final account (4:13-15). The poor were constantly struggling to get money, oftentimes perhaps what was due them as wages. There seem to have been exhibitions of violence (4:1-2). Even those that cried out to God for help were thoroughly selfish (4:3). Their love of money and of what it would get made them false to God (4:4, compare Matt. 6:24). They need a humbler, soberer spirit (4:5-10).

The paragraph 2:14-16 is best explained on the supposition that Paul had been preaching his doctrine of righteousness by faith in some of the churches now addressed by James. Perhaps this had been done during his residence in Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1:21). This doctrine was one very easily misrepresented, as is evident from Paul's statement some years later in Rom. 3:5-8.

James felt the necessity of correcting this misunderstanding of Paul's teaching, and in so doing used the illustration of Abraham, which was a favorite one with Paul, and which was, therefore, current among those now addressed.

This letter is a sturdy protest against the idea that there is value in high ideals apart from any faithful effort to realize them in daily life. How many things we think of doing, but never do! The next time you think of doing something kind, DO IT.

PART IV

THE TESTIMONY IS BORNE FOR THE FIRST TIME TO FOREIGNERS THAT HAVE NO CONNECTION WITH THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE. 12:25—16:5.

STUDY X.—In South Galatia Paul and Barnabas learn that Pagan Gentiles May Accept the Testimony. 12:25—14:20.

STUDY XI.—The Jerusalem Church Indorses the New Work Among Gentiles. 14:21—16:5.

Study X.—In South Galatia Paul and Barnabas Learn That Pagan Gentiles May Accept the Testimony. 12:25—14:20

First Day: The Testimony Carried Westward from the New Center. 12:25—13:4

The testimony was now to be carried swiftly westward. The general situation was favorable for a forward movement with quick results. (1) The witnesses had not to spend several years learning a new language, for Greek would answer everywhere. (2) They had not to wait months for passports, but could go everywhere in the empire freely on the great Roman roads and abundant shipping. (3) They had no need to build chapels, but found in the Jewish synagogues a meeting-house awaiting them. (4) In the meeting-house they found a Jewish audience thoroughly trained in a monotheistic faith and expectant of a Messiah. (5) On the edges of this audience there was a fringe of susceptible Gentiles already familiar with the worship of Jehovah and with the Messianic expectation, who constituted a natural means of connection with the Gentile community. (6) The presence of these Gentiles in the audience was evidence of the general religious unrest among the Gentiles and of their readiness to appreciate something higher and better than their native faiths.

Read 12:25—13:5. Remember who John Mark was (12:12). It was he who preserved Peter's reminiscences of Jesus which have come down to us in the "Gospel of Mark."

Note what was said about "prophets" in Study IX, Second Day. "Teachers" probably gave systematic instruction without waiting for sudden and special inspiration. The list begins with Barnabas, the distinguished representative of the Jerusalem church, and ends with Saul, the latest arrival and perhaps the youngest.

How did the Holy Spirit say this (v. 2)? Did they probably plan a route for the missionaries before leaving Antioch? How does this effort to extend Christianity differ from previous efforts? Did Barnabas and Saul, when they started, expect to preach to Gentiles?

A group of prayerful Brothers probably walked the sixteen miles to Seleucia, the harbor town of Antioch, and waved farewell to the three missionaries as they sailed away to Cyprus. Consult the map.

The Spirit of God goes before the witnesses in a leadership which no man is able to exercise. It was He that looked out westward through the wistful eyes of the prophets. It was He who had prepared Barnabas and Saul and now "called" them.

Study X.—In South Galatia Paul and Barnabas Learn That Pagan Gentiles May Accept the Testimony. 12:25—14:20

Second Day: Saul's Leadership Begins in a Contest with a Magian. 13:5-13

Read vv. 4-6, and locate on the map the places mentioned. What two possible reasons for selecting Cyprus as their first destination are suggested by 4:36 and 11:20? It is evident from 11:19 that some preaching had already been done in this island. Note in Col. 4:10 a probable reason for choosing John Mark as "minister" or "attendant." The service indicated by this word is very possibly catechetical instruction in the life and teaching of Jesus, such as might have been considered necessary for converts.

They may have preached their way in a leisurely fashion through the island (v. 6), perhaps visiting the lumber and mining towns for which the island was famous, if there were any Jewish synagogues in them. If there were any Jehovah-worshiping Gentiles in these synagogues, doubtless the travelers included them in their appeals just as they had been accustomed to do in Antioch.

Read vv. 7-12. Do you see why Luke makes so much of this incident? It was a typical contest between the new doctrine and a current form of religious or semi-religious faith (Ramsay). How could such a magian gain influence over an intelligent (v. 7) Roman official like the pro-consul? Remember what was said earlier about the Samaritan magian in chapter 8. The pro-consul was probably a Gentile of the synagogue, for the magian, who had gained such influence over him, was a Jew and ostensibly a prophet of Jehovah. The pro-consul would not have been likely to hear Barnabas and Saul anywhere else than in the synagogue. Why was the magian opposed to the new prophets (v. 8)? This study will be continued to-morrow.

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit" (v. 4). It is a comfort in times of discouragement to feel a conviction that one has been sent by God to his work, and that consequently he is in the right place, whatever its difficulties may be.

Study X.—In South Galatia Paul and Barnabas Learn That Pagan Gentiles May Accept the Testimony. 12:25—14:20

Third Day: Saul's Leadership Begins in a Contest with a Magian (*Concluded*). 13:5-13

Saul felt a strong impulse to attack the magian, in order to save the pro-consul, and the event showed that the impulse came from the Spirit of God (v. 9). Impressed by the striking inconsistency of the magian's name, "Son of Jesus," or "Son of Joshua," Saul called him "Son of the Devil," and with characteristic force drove him from the field. Does the narrative read as if the magian's blindness was total? And permanent? Perhaps Saul judged from his own experience (9:9) that a period of blindness would do the magian good! Paul's own letters seem to allude to a consciousness of power to produce marvelous results, like the one described here. (Romans 15:18-19. 2 Cor. 12:12 and perhaps 1 Cor. 5:4-5.)

The prominent feature of this incident is the emergence of Saul from under the shadow of Barnabas. Saul exercises leadership from this point on. Cf. v. 7 with v. 13. Luke implies that it is the Holy Spirit who brings Paul to the front (v. 9).

Now that Paul is fairly launched on his career of apostolic leadership in the Roman world, Luke feels the propriety of beginning to use the Roman name, "Paul," which had probably been given in childhood.

When the company had crossed to the mainland in Pamphylia, their young assistant left and returned to his mother in Jerusalem (cf. 12:12). Paul took this very much to heart, as is evident from 15:36-39. The reason for his leaving was probably something that occurred on the passage to the mainland, or after they reached the mainland, for otherwise he would have gone back through the island from Paphos. What seem to you to have been the possible reasons for his action?

Behind Paul and Barnabas in all these days of new beginnings was the great praying church in Antioch. Do you often pray for your friends and acquaintances in foreign lands?

Study X.—In South Galatia Paul and Barnabas Learn That Pagan Gentiles May Accept the Testimony. 12:25—14:20

Fourth Day: Paul Testifies in the Synagogue of Pisidian Antioch. 13:14-42

Read the very meager narrative in vv. 13-14. For some reason Paul wished to lead "his company" up from the lowlands along the coast through the rough mountain country, dangerous for travelers because of brigands and mountain streams hard to cross at certain seasons (cf. 2 Cor. 11:26), to the high plain in which Pisidian Antioch is situated. Professor Ramsay holds that Paul went to the highlands to recover from malarial fever, by which he had been attacked in the lowlands, and finds evidence of this in Gal. 4:13, which probably included the Antiochians among its readers. Read Gal. 4:13-15, and notice that the ailment referred to was somewhat humiliating in its character. Professor Ramsay thinks that malarial chills and fever coming suddenly upon a public speaker, so prostrating him as to incapacitate him for public work, would have been humiliating, especially since the inscriptions of the country indicate that the fever was considered a punishment inflicted by the gods. Perhaps it seemed to young John Mark a piece of foolishness to follow a sick man through the dangerous passes of the Taurus mountains. If so, his desertion at a critical juncture, when his services were so much needed, would have been exceedingly exasperating. Very possibly also it disturbed him to see that his uncle, Barnabas, who was so much more highly esteemed than Paul in Jerusalem, was no longer the dominating influence in the company!

Paul and Barnabas finally reached Pisidian Antioch, an important military center on a great Roman road. They called on the leaders of the ghetto, who were glad to engage the traveling rabbis from Palestine for the synagogue service of the next Sabbath. Read vv. 15-41, and note the principal points made by Paul. Notice that he at once recognized the presence of the God-fearing Gentiles (v. 16), and later included them in his offer of Messianic salvation (v. 26).

"We bring you good tidings" (v. 32). **When you speak to a man about becoming a Christian, you are bringing good news to him. You have no need to apologize for speaking to him. You are opening up before him the greatest opportunity that can confront a human being.**

Study X.—In South Galatia Paul and Barnabas Learn That Pagan Gentiles May Accept the Testimony. 12:25—14:20

Fifth Day: Paul and Barnabas for the First Time Turn to Pagan Gentiles. 13:42-49

The synagogue audience poured out through the door in great excitement and a week of earnest debate in the ghetto followed. Paul and Barnabas saw that a crisis was at hand, and, doubtless after a prayerful study of the scriptures, determined to meet it by taking a new step forward. They proposed to leave the synagogue, and in some other building present their message to Gentiles in general, regardless of any previous or anticipated connection with the synagogue. Read vv. 42-49. To whom does "thee" refer in the quotation (Is. 49:6), and how does the quotation justify their new step? Why was it necessary that the word should first be spoken to Jews (v. 46)? What favorite idea of Luke appears in v. 48? On possible meeting-places outside the synagogue cf. 18:6-7; 19:9.

The preaching outside the synagogue evidently continued for some time, perhaps for some months, as is evident from the effect produced by it throughout the sub-division of the province in which Antioch was situated (v. 49).

The great crime of the Jews consisted not in the crucifixion of Jesus, which was the work of the local ecclesiastical machine in Jerusalem rather than the deed of the nation, but in their persistent determination not to sacrifice their pre-eminence, in their bitter unwillingness to share special privileges with all men. This brought them into direct conflict with the living God, who had seemed to concentrate attention on them for a time in order that through them He might ultimately more effectively bless all nations. The penalty they have paid is known to all the world. They expected to have the whole earth for themselves (cf. Rom. 4:13), but as a nation they have no foot of it. It is the lesson of the ages writ large: he that will not share shall not have.

Study X.—In South Galatia Paul and Barnabas Learn That Pagan Gentiles May Accept the Testimony. 12:25—14:20

Sixth Day: Further Testimony in Galatia. 13:50—14:7

Read 13:50-52. What evidence is there here that God approved this new step forward? Were the "disciples" (v. 52) Paul and Barnabas or the new converts?

The Jewish religion appealed particularly to the Gentile women of the higher classes, and many of them were found among the Jehovah-worshiping Gentiles. The Antioch rabbis worked upon these foreign ladies of the synagogue and through them upon their husbands, who were influential citizens. On what ground do you suppose they urged their expulsion from the city (v. 50)?

They went sixty miles southeast to another important city of South Galatia. Read 14:1-7. In v. 1 it is probably the work in the synagogue and its success among Jews and Jehovah-worshiping Gentiles that is described. The rabbis stirred up the Jehovah-worshiping Gentiles that were not converted, and expelled the missionaries from the synagogue (v. 2). Then in some other building the work continued for a long time among Gentiles in general (v. 3). Finally the attention of the entire city was attracted to the new movement and the missionaries left the city just in time to escape being lynched (vv. 5-6). What evidence does Luke give that here, as usual, God endorsed the forward movement? From Iconium they went about forty miles south to Lystra, a Roman garrison town of great importance, and later to Derbe, about twenty miles further. Note, in v. 6, the extent of the work.

"They were filled with jealousy" (13:45). Do you feel jealousy or discomfort when you find another more successful than yourself, or when you find others beginning to share what you had regarded as your own special pre-eminence? Remember that the other man's success is just as great a satisfaction to Jesus Christ as yours is, and try to share the satisfaction of Jesus.

Study X.—In South Galatia Paul and Barnabas Learn That Pagan Gentiles May Accept the Testimony. 12:25—14:20

Seventh Day: Mortal Peril in Lystra. 14:8-20

One of Paul's regular hearers in Lystra was a man who had been a cripple from birth. When Paul had perhaps been describing some of the cures God had wrought by him in the neighboring city (14:3), he saw an expression on the cripple's face as he sat in the audience that made him suddenly shout to him: "Stand up on your feet." Read vv. 8-10.

The crowds went wild when they saw what had happened, and word passed swiftly in the vernacular from lip to lip that the strangers were gods. There is a tradition, which was probably current among them, that Zeus and Hermes had once visited the region, and the cry was raised that the two gods had appeared again. Some one ran with the word to the temple of Zeus, who was their tutelary deity, and soon the priest came hurrying on with garlanded bullocks ready for sacrifice. Paul and Barnabas protested vigorously. Their protest was so effective that the disappointed priest, doubtless somewhat chagrined, ordered his bullocks led back to their stalls. Read vv. 11-18.

According to vv. 15-17 what motives was Paul accustomed to use in his appeal to pagan audiences?

Read vv. 19-20. Note, as evidence of their hatred, the distance traveled by this joint deputation.

Paul's body was dragged out to the city refuse-heap, like the carcass of a dog. But when the disciples went to get it for burial, "in the evening," according to one manuscript, "he rose up with difficulty and entered the city."

An angel looking down upon these scenes in South Galatia would have thought this spectacle in Lystra beyond belief. A crowd of angry men running down a street, chasing two men as if they were dogs, overtaking them and stoning one of them until he is apparently dead! Yet these two men are bearers of good news from God and have in their hearts only good will towards those who would kill them! And yet, however high the tide of sin rises, God's grace rises higher. Where sin abounds, grace superabounds.

Study XI.—The Jerusalem Church Endorses the New Work Among Gentiles. 14:21—16:5

First Day: Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch. 14:21-28

From Derbe Paul and Barnabas might have gone on through the Cilician Gates to Tarsus, and thence through the Syrian Gates home to Antioch. Consult the map. Home would certainly have been welcome! Behind them were unscrupulous enemies, who would kill them if they could. Nevertheless, they turned back. Why? Read vv. 21-23. What did they do to "confirm the souls of the disciples" (v. 22)? And what was the character of the "tribulations"?

Evidently it at once became necessary to form new organizations for the groups of believers in these cities. The Jewish Christians might have continued in the old synagogue, worshiping God as they had worshiped Him before Paul and Barnabas came, for there was nothing in synagogue worship that was inconsistent with the belief in Jesus' Messiahship. Jesus had always attended the synagogue. But the synagogue authorities probably objected to their presence, and certainly such Gentile Christians as had not been previously connected with the synagogue would not wish to attend now, even if allowed to do so. If you have time, consider why these converts needed a church organization. A study of this question in the case of this simple, primitive situation, where all the essential elements in the case stand out in clear relief, may throw some light on the reason for the existence and support of the modern church.

Trace on the map their return route as described in vv. 24-26. Note, in v. 27, the simple item on which all the interest of the author is centered.

"Confirming the souls of the disciples" (v. 22). We sometimes feel greatly concerned about those who are not Christians, but many a man who joined the church when a boy may be passing through a period of painful doubt as he proceeds to transform inherited opinions into personal convictions, and need sympathetic help fully as much as one who is not called a Christian.

Study XI.—The Jerusalem Church Endorses the New Work Among Gentiles. 14:21—16:5

Second Day: The Validity of Gentile Faith Questioned. 15:1-5

The period of peaceful reminiscence in Antioch after these long months, or years, of excitement and peril was terminated by an unpleasant episode. A delegation from Judæa visited the Antioch church and declared that the Christian faith of the large Gentile element in the church would not suffice to secure them a place in the Messianic Kingdom of God. Read vv. 1-5. It is necessary to see clearly the view-point of these protesting visitors. They were Pharisees who, like Paul, had become convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, but who took an attitude toward Gentile Christians entirely different from that of Paul and Barnabas. They thought that the law of Moses was inspired by God, and therefore unchangeable in all its details. It seemed to them that the great promise of the Messianic Kingdom had been made to law-keeping Jews, and therefore no Gentile could hope to have part in it unless, by circumcision, he became a member of the body to which the promise had been made. To be sure, no one could be admitted to this Kingdom without believing in Jesus as the Messiah, but only law-keeping Jews or regularly circumcised proselytes had the privilege of believing in the Messiah.

Give the following general questions as much thought to-day as your time permits: Why did these Pharisees make their protest in the Syrian Antioch church? Why did they make it just at this time? In the great discussion provoked by them in the Antioch church (v. 2) what answer did Paul and Barnabas probably make to their arguments?

The churches in Phœnicia had no objection to Gentile Christianity, for many of them, following the example of the great church in Syrian Antioch, probably had admitted Gentiles of the synagogue into their membership. Of course the Samaritans would not object (v. 3).

Do you heartily count as a Christian brother every man who takes Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, no matter how much he differs from you in social habits or theological views?

Study XI.—The Jerusalem Church Endorses the New Work Among Gentiles. 14:21—16:5

Third Day: The Great Debate. 15:6-21

The proceedings of this so-called "council" in Jerusalem, conducted with oriental deliberation, probably continued for several weeks. The strenuous Pharisee minority which appears here protesting against Gentile Christianity, may have come into the church after Peter's experience with Cornelius and after the founding of the Jewish-Gentile church in Syrian Antioch (11:20-24). If they were already in the Jerusalem church at that time, they doubtless shook their heads over the situation, but let it pass as something exceptional, and not worth contending against. But when the movement assumed such unexpectedly large dimensions under Paul and Barnabas in South Galatia, and included pagan Gentiles, they felt the imperative necessity of making an uncompromising stand against the movement. Naturally they went, first of all, to the source of the trouble, the church in Syrian Antioch. Very probably they proposed to proceed from there to Pisidian Antioch and the other cities of South Galatia, and to repair the mischief that Paul and Barnabas had done. If so, the determined opposition they met from Paul and Barnabas in Syrian Antioch and the appeal to Jerusalem temporarily checked them.

Why did the question seem to Paul and Barnabas to be so important? Why not yield to the representation of the protesting Pharisee?

Read vv. 6-13, and state Peter's argument. Notice that it is not the mere surgical operation of circumcision that is urged, but the keeping of the entire Mosaic law. To put the rabbi's "yoke" upon all the Gentile Christians and try to teach them to do what the Jews themselves had never succeeded in doing would vex God. What was the argument advanced by Barnabas and Paul in v. 12?

Do you take pains to familiarize yourself with the wonderful side of God's work in the world (v. 12)? Do you read missionary literature enough to acquaint yourself with God's achievements in non-Christian nations? Some of them are as marvelous as any recorded in Acts, and they constitute now, as then, striking proof that God is at work in the world.

A. D. 52 (Zahn); A. D. 47 (46) (Harnack); A. D. 49 (Ramsay).

Study XI.—The Jerusalem Church Endorses the New Work Among Gentiles. 14:21—16:5

Fourth Day: The Decision to Endorse Gentile Christianity. 15:13-29

After Paul and Barnabas had joined Peter in an appeal to the logic of events (v. 12), the decisive speech, proposing the action finally taken, was made by James, the famous brother of Jesus. Read it in vv. 14-21, and state its argument. He cited, perhaps with some quiet sense of family pride, a prophecy that spoke of the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, which he evidently conceived to be fulfilled in the Messianic glory of Jesus. Very likely to his mind it also involved the prospective establishment of Jewish national political prestige. He pointed out that the prophecy included Gentiles as well as Jews (v. 17). The protesting Pharisees might have responded that, to be sure, the Gentiles were included, but of course only on condition that they become circumcised Jewish citizens. James would probably have used the argument of Paul and Barnabas in reply.

James proposed, however, that four things be required of all Gentile converts. Read vv. 20-21. It may very likely be, as Professor Ramsay suggests, that these four requirements had always been made by the synagogue authorities of such as wished to become Gentiles of the synagogue. If so, then James proposed that Gentile Christians should be received into the Christian church on the same terms upon which they had been tolerated in the synagogue. Does v. 21 mean that, since Jewish synagogues were to be found in every city where there was likely to be a Christian church, concessions must be made by Gentile Christians to the feelings of the Jewish Christians for the sake of fellowship? Or that, since Moses was so generally taught in all Jewish synagogues, Christian Jews would surely remain loyal to Moses and not claim for themselves the same laxity that it is proposed to tolerate in the case of Gentile Christians? Or that Gentile Christians will be ready to yield these four points, since they have long been familiar, by hearsay at least, with Moses' teaching on these points?

The practical value of the requirement that concerned meat from an animal offered in pagan worship before being sent to market is at once apparent. Unless a Jewish Christian could be sure that he should never find such meat on a Gentile brother's table, he would

never visit him and would probably refuse all Christian fellowship. The regulation regarding blood in Leviticus 17: 10 expressly included sojourning Gentiles ("strangers that sojourn among them"), and so might have been thought to apply directly to Gentile Christians. "Things strangled," which had the blood still in them, perhaps came in the same category. Fornication seemed to the Gentiles, even to some Christian Gentiles (1 Cor. 6: 12-17), to be the harmless gratification of a natural appetite, but the Jewish Christian must be assured that the Gentile had discarded this abhorrent view.

The decision settled one point with perfect clearness—a Gentile need not become a Jew, in order to be a Christian. It left two points unsettled: (1) Would a Gentile be a *better* Christian if he would consent to be circumcised? The unreconciled Pharisaic minority seem to have left this council and to have sent emissaries throughout South Galatia, urging that the Gentiles could not be Christians of the highest grade unless circumcised, a view which Paul's epistle to the Galatians seems to have been written to oppose. (2) Could a Jewish Christian have intimate social relationship with an uncircumcised Gentile brother? Misunderstanding on this point probably led to the unfortunate episode described in Gal. 2: 11-14.

"That the residue of men may seek after the Lord" (v. 17). This is the age when the human residuum is being brought to seek after the Lord. What has ordinarily been regarded as the waste of humanity, the submerged tenth in the great cities, the despised races, the cannibals among the heathen, is receiving a new valuation. We are waking up to see God's age-long purpose to do this great class good, just as the church woke up to the same fact in the period we are studying.

In your life plans are you taking account of your duty to the "residue of men," or do you chiefly consider the favored classes?

Study XI.—The Jerusalem Church Endorses the New Work Among Gentiles. 14:21—16:5

Fifth Day: The Decision Reported in Antioch. 15:22-35

Read carefully vv. 23-29. Note the attitude of the council to (1) those who had made the protest, (2) those whose missionary work had been criticised, (3) the Gentile Christians. How did they know that it seemed so to the Holy Spirit (v. 28)?

The Jerusalem church showed its extreme consideration for the Gentile church in Antioch by selecting distinguished men to deliver their decision in person.

Read vv. 30-33, and note the precautions taken to remove all vestiges of unpleasant feelings that might have been occasioned by the recent discussion. Probably there was a period of great social activity, in which many Jewish Christians freely entered the homes of their Gentile brethren. All ate the Lord's Supper together, regardless of nationality.

It is not entirely clear that the episode described in Gal. 2:11-14 occurred after the Jerusalem council, but such is generally thought to have been the case. Read it carefully. If it did occur after the council, then Peter (Cephas) himself visited Antioch and joined in the general good feeling. He seemed to agree with Paul that it had been the intent of the Jerusalem council not only to recognize the validity of Gentile Christianity, but to legitimatize free social intercourse between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Evidently not every Jerusalem Christian took this view. Certain distinguished Christians from Jerusalem, not the defeated Pharisees of course, perhaps representing the view of James himself, denied that any such interpretation of the council's action ought to be made. Their influence was so great as to make Peter, and even Barnabas, withdraw from all Gentile dinner parties. Paul regarded such withdrawal as insincere, and said so publicly.

"God . . . had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles" (14:27). He opened the door, and held it open when men struggled to shut it. No thoughtful modern "Gentiles," familiar with Christian history, can long hesitate to enter the door opened, and held open, at such a cost.

Study XI.—The Jerusalem Church Endorses the New Work Among Gentiles. 14:21—16:5

Sixth Day: Paul's Own Version of the Jerusalem Council. *Gal.* 2:1-10

In Paul's letter to the Galatians (2:1-10) he gives an account of a visit to Jerusalem, generally thought to be the council visit which we are now studying. The standpoint of Paul's account is entirely different from that of Luke's. Paul is chiefly concerned to show that his own personal relationship to the Jerusalem apostles was one of independence, and so he gives an inside view of that which Luke describes from the outside. This results in some differences of detail in the two accounts, but in no clear contradictions.

Read Gal. 2:1-10, and note the points in which it resembles and differs from the account in Acts 15.

The following is a paraphrase of the difficult verses (Gal. 2:2-5): "I laid my gospel of salvation for Gentiles by faith alone before a private meeting of the apostles and elders, because I feared that in a great public meeting there might not be such an opportunity for question and answer as would result in my position being clearly understood. In that case I feared they might decide against the acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles, and so my missionary career of the present and past among the Gentiles be in vain (v. 2). They did not, however, even ask for the circumcision of my associate Titus (v. 3). The question of his circumcision would never have been raised at all, had it not been for certain men who had slipped into church membership without being genuinely converted; who had joined the church simply to ascertain the degree of intercourse allowed between Jewish and Gentile Christians, and to use their influence against freeing Gentile Christians from bondage to the Mosaic law (v. 4). You may be sure we stood firmly for your recognition as Christians without circumcision" (v. 5).

Are you sometimes deterred from doing what you know to be right, by dread of what influential persons may think of you? Jesus is an influential person. Try to realize His presence.

Study XI.—The Jerusalem Church Endorses the New Work Among Gentiles. 14:21—16:5

Seventh Day: The Decision of the Council Carried to the South Galatian Churches. 15:36—16:5

Read 15:36-41. Why was the fact that Barnabas' nephew had not gone with them before a reason for not taking him now? With which of the two do the author and the Antioch church seem to have sympathized? Had the episode in Gal. 2:11-14 anything to do with this disagreement? Notice the evidence that Mark worked later with Paul and was regarded by him as a valued assistant. Col. 4:10. 2 Tim. 4:11. Barnabas goes to the region where he is best known and to that part of their previous route which John Mark had traveled with them.

Read 16:1-5. The two things that interest Luke are the delivery of the decision of the Jerusalem council to these churches whose Jewish-Gentile membership would naturally be so keenly interested in it, and Paul's discovery of a new assistant destined to be ever after intimately associated with him and his work. Paul speaks of him in 1 Cor. 4:17 as one of his converts, and he had, therefore, been converted on Paul's previous visit to this region. His family belonged to the less conservative element among the Jews. The decision of the Jerusalem council had not applied to Jews, and it was important, therefore, that Timothy as a Jew should be circumcised. Very likely one strong argument against allowing Gentile liberty had been the fear that Jewish Christians would soon ask for the same, and Paul wished to give no justification for this fear.

The churches have come through another crisis, and are stronger than before (v. 5). How was the "daily" increase secured?

"Him would Paul have to go forth with him" (v. 3). Paul always desired and appreciated associates. Might it not be that your efficiency as a Christian would be largely increased if you were to cultivate the friendship of one or two Christian friends, with whom you might have frequent prayer and conversation? Perhaps you have already learned the value of such association. If so, recommend it to others. The adoption of the suggestion may mark the beginning of a new era in their Christian experience.

PART V

THE TESTIMONY IS CARRIED TO GENTILES IN THE ROMAN PROVINCES, MACEDONIA, ACHAIA AND ASIA BY PAUL AND HIS ASSOCIATES, UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF GOD AND IN SPITE OF JEWISH OPPOSITION. 16:6—19:20

STUDY XII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Macedonia. 16:6—17:15.

STUDY XIII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Achaia. 17:16—18:18.

STUDY XIV.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Asia. 18:19—19:20.

Study XII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Macedonia. 16:6—17:15

First Day: Paul's Period of Uncertainty. 16:6-10

Paul with his young associate Timothy, and Silas the Jerusalem prophet, passed through the cities in which he had preached a year or two before, reporting to them the action of the Jerusalem council. When this definite work of revisitation and delivery of the decree was accomplished, Paul experienced the utmost difficulty in deciding what to do next. The Roman province Asia to the west seemed to him to present promising opportunities for doing what he and Barnabas had done in the South Galatian cities, but when he began to plan to go there he found himself "forbidden of the Holy Spirit" to do so. Then he went on, after leaving Pisidian Antioch, through the rest of Phrygian Galatia, and traveled northward toward the Roman province Bithynia. But when he had reached a certain point on their journey he found that the "Spirit of Jesus suffered them" to go no farther. They then traveled **west**ward until they finally reached the seaport Troas. Read vv. 6-8. How did the Spirit make this wish known? Through Silas the "prophet" (15:32)? Compare also 18:9.

These months must have been very unsatisfactory to Paul in some ways. The memory of his sharp words with Barnabas must have been an unpleasant one. Everywhere in South Galatia he was reminded of the pleasant companionship they had enjoyed in their earlier work in these cities. He was repeatedly embarrassed by being obliged to explain why Barnabas was not with him! These long journeys without the satisfaction of knowing where he was going were very trying. He was perhaps almost ready for the services of a physician when he finally reached the seaport where Luke, "the beloved physician," joined the party ("we," v. 10).

The cry of the man in the vision contained one word that always stirred Paul's soul! Read vv. 9-10.

The church of Jesus Christ is a company of men and women banded together by Jesus Christ for the purpose of bringing help to every point of need, far or near. Wherever any soul stands in need, even though the need be unrecognized by the needy soul itself, there some member of this Christly band is to hasten with help.

Chapters 16-18, A. D. 52-54 (Zahn); A. D. 47-49 (46-50) (Harnack).

Study XII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Macedonia. 16:6—17:15

Second Day: The Beginning in Philippi. 6:11-15

On some one of the boats that sailed over the blue waters of the Mediterranean there were four travelers, like their fellow-travelers in outward appearance, but on an errand that has made them live in history, and that has given an abiding interest to every spot they touched. They went at once to the great "colony city," Philippi, situated on the Egnatian Road. As a "colony city" it enjoyed special privileges, of which it was naturally proud. Professor Ramsay considers Luke to have been a Macedonian, and thinks that Paul's vision in Troas took the form it did because Luke had previously been urging him to begin work in Macedonia. If so, Luke would naturally have many things to show them.

Read vv. 11-13. Does the situation seem on the whole to promise as great results as the Troas vision may have led them to anticipate? Does there seem to have been a synagogue in the city? Where was the "man of Macedonia" who had appeared in the vision! This situation must have stood out in discouraging contrast with the brilliant successes in South Galatia when Barnabas was still with him! Was the one convert a Jewess? She was evidently a woman of business ability and of some means, for she had in the bazaar a stock of fine goods brought from her home city in Asia, also a "household," and she felt herself able to entertain the four strangers in her home. Paul was exceedingly careful not to overtax anyone's hospitality (cf. 1 Thess. 2:9). Is there any evidence here that he hesitated about accepting her invitation? What evidence is there here that Luke regards this new step as instigated of God?

"Whose heart the Lord opened" (v. 14). There is need that we keep constantly in mind the mystery of the presence of God. The presentation of moral truth in any form to another possesses a fascinating interest when God's presence, leadership, and cooperation are recognized and counted on.

Study XII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Macedonia. 16:6—17:15

Third Day: Paul and Silas Publicly Whipped and Imprisoned. 16:16-24

A half-demented slave-girl attended the riverside services and caught up certain phrases from the lips of the preachers,—"Most High God," "salvation,"—and for days afterward, whenever she saw them upon the street, it was her custom to follow them and shout the phrases at them. The slave-girl's condition and behavior greatly distressed Paul and he finally felt himself moved by the Spirit of Jesus to cure her diseased mind. Read vv. 16-18. The girl is described as having a "Python spirit" or "Delphic spirit." That is, her oracular utterances were regarded as having some prophetic value, and people were willing to pay her owners for the privilege of consulting her about their business ventures or love affairs.

Paul as a stranger systematically propagating religious ideas had always to contend with the suspicion that he was introducing a new religion; and in a civilization in which the government licensed religion this might at any time make him politically offensive. The fact that his principal idea was the Messiahship of Jesus was a still more suspicious circumstance. It was always easy to say that he was preaching "another emperor" than Cæsar (cf. 17:7). The owners of the slave-girl, angered by the fact that he had ruined their business, tried to fan this ever-smouldering suspicion into a flame of hate. In addition to this, they rang out the old anti-Semite cry in the market, a cry all the more popular just now in this "colony city," eager to ape the mood of the mother city, Rome, where an anti-Semite agitation was on (cf. 18:2). Why did Paul and Silas not announce their Roman citizenship (v. 37) and claim immunity from such punishment?

The long contest of the ages is the contest between the passion for money and regard for men. The owners of the slave-girl cared more for money than for the welfare of the girl. Sometimes those who are operating manufacturing establishments care more for large dividends than for the safety and health of their operatives. Any moral reform that affects "business" is opposed. Christianity's aim is to establish the fact that men are more than money.

Study XII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Macedonia. 16:6—17:15

Fourth Day: God Vindicates His Witnesses. 16:25-32

The main point here is that God, with a strong hand, brought His witnesses out of prison and even transformed the jailer himself into one of their followers! Read vv. 25-32. It might well have seemed to Paul, as he sat chained in the darkness with his back raw and his feet fast in the heavy blocks, that this was the climax of all the misfortune and disappointments of the recent months. But that would not have been like Paul. Read v. 25 once more. Paul was speaking out of his own experience when a few months later he wrote: "Rejoice alway. Pray without ceasing. In *everything* give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Was God connected with this earthquake? It is said that the structure of a modern Turkish prison is such that the effect of an earthquake is to loosen bars, bolts and staples. (Ramsay's *St. Paul,* pp. 220-221.)

Why should the jailer wish to kill himself (v. 27)? Paul, looking out toward the lights for which the jailer immediately called, saw his uplifted hand and gleaming knife, and stopped him with a "great cry." His Christian instinct to "help" came instantly into action. The other prisoners would have been glad to see him kill himself.

As soon as the jailer had secured the other prisoners (so one manuscript reads), he salaamed to his two rescuers, brought them out and asked the great question: "What shall I do to be saved?" What did he mean by this question? Saved from what? Had he heard their preaching during the past weeks? To "believe in" a person is to believe him to be what he represents himself to be, and to treat him accordingly. What is it, then, to believe in Jesus as Lord? Cf. 1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 10:9 (Revised Version).

Opportunities are exceedingly deceptive in appearance. An apparent limitation is often a great opportunity. Here were two men in a most unpromising situation. They might well have sat in the midnight darkness, groaning in gloomy bitterness of spirit. But though they were so tightly bound they could still sing and pray, and God made it to be their hour of power. To the soul in joyful league with God the time of apparent limitation may be the hour of greatest opportunity.

Study XII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Macedonia. 16:6—17:15

Fifth Day: The Triumphant Departure. 16: 32-40

The two witnesses followed up their first swift reply to the jailer's question with more extended explanations, both for himself and his entire domestic establishment (v. 32). The whole household became Christians on the spot and began at once the kindly offices of Christian helpfulness. Read vv. 33-34. Perhaps this breakfast was not merely necessary refreshment for the men weakened by their public whipping, but it may also have had the significance of the Lord's Supper following baptism. Read vv. 35-39. Why did the magistrates wish these men released? Had they connected the earthquake with them? Paul's feeling in v. 37 was entirely natural. He may have thought also that such action would serve to keep the magistrates from taking any measures against the Philippian believers after he and Silas had left the city. The magistrates had good reason to fear serious consequences if their action should be reported at Rome. Note that Silas seems also to have been a Roman citizen. Paul and Silas were great souls. It might seem as if the "brethren" would have comforted them (v. 40).

This word "brethren" shows that a group of believers had been formed here. They were peculiarly dear to Paul ever after. It may be interesting to glance at a few expressions in a single extant letter that Paul later wrote them. Notice in Phil. 4: 15-16 what they did for him in the weeks just after his departure from the city. Read also Phil. 1: 3-11 and 4: 1-7.

The secret of Paul's joy in the midst of suffering was the glad consciousness that by such experiences he was becoming constantly better acquainted with his Lord. The ambition of Paul's life was to experience a deepening acquaintance with the One who met him on the Damascus road,—as he expressed it to these same Philippians, "to know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10).

Study XII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Macedonia. 16:6—17:15

Sixth Day: Further Testimony in Macedonia. 17:1-9

The pronoun "they," instead of "we," indicates that Luke remained behind in Philippi. Note that the pronoun "we" does not occur again until Paul returns to Philippi some years later (20:6). Paul, Timothy and Silas traveled down the great Egnatian Road through two cities and stopped finally in Thessalonica, 100 miles distant from Philippi. It was a great, rich city, and, like the modern Saloniki, was the seaport for a large and rich interior. It had communication by sea with all the Mediterranean world. Anything that happened here would surely soon be known in all that part of the world (cf. 1 Thess. 1:8).

Read vv. 1-4. Was the length of Paul's stay in the city three weeks, or was that the time he was allowed the privilege of the synagogue platform? Phil. 4:16 throws some light on this point, together with 1 Thess. 2:9. From what three classes were his converts drawn, according to v. 4? What fourth class appears in 1 Thess. 1:9?

Read vv. 5-9. The leaders of the ghetto, jealous of the popularity of these traveling rabbis and jealously resenting their admission of Gentiles into the special privileges of the Jews, played upon the superstition of the rabble and the political fears of the "Politarchs," who were perhaps afraid the city might lose its privilege of being a "free city" (Clemen), to such an extent that an attempt was made to arrest Paul. Perhaps they enlisted the pagan priests whose temples were losing worshipers (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9).

Jason was probably a Gentile, who had offered his house as a meeting-place after Paul was refused the further use of the synagogue. It seems from v. 6 that reports had come from Philippi and also from South Galatia (13:50; 14:4-5, 19).

"There is another king, one Jesus" (v. 7). Would anyone guess it from your life?

Study XII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Macedonia. 16:6—17:15

Seventh Day: Paul Driven Out of Macedonia. 17:10-15

The "Brothers" in Thessalonica had concealed Paul and his associates, but the "Politarchs" had probably required Jason to pledge that Paul would leave the city. The feeling of the "rabble" (v. 5) was so intense that the Brothers thought it best for Paul and Silas to leave by night and immediately. The missionaries slipped away to Berœa, a comparatively secluded town, not on the Egnatian Road, about fifty miles from Thessalonica.

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians makes it evident that he left Thessalonica before his work there was in condition to leave (3:5), and that he was accused by his enemies in the city of being a heartless adventurer who had been after the money of his converts, and whom they would never see again (2:5-9). He seems to have hoped that the feeling against him in Thessalonica would soon subside to a point that would make it practicable for him to return without endangering Jason (Ramsay). Read 1 Thess. 2:17-19.

The Jews in Berœa were less conservative than those in Thessalonica, and gave the missionaries a much fairer hearing. Read vv. 10-12. The extreme bitterness of the Jewish feeling against Paul appears in v. 13.

Read vv. 14-15, and note the evidence of Paul's great danger. When the Thessalonian Jews came to Berœa, Paul instantly left the city, either concealing, or not having decided upon, his destination. Perhaps Silas and Timothy stayed behind to make the Thessalonian pursuers think that Paul was being concealed in the city. The deputation of Berœan Brothers that served as the bodyguard did not think it safe to leave him until they had reached the distant city, Athens. Indeed it seemed scarcely safe to leave him alone then. They probably feared assassination.

"They received the word with all readiness of mind" (v. 11). As this study proceeds do you find yourself receiving the word with readiness? Are you ready to be and do whatever the word requires, to adjust your plans to the demands made upon your life by this great movement whose history we are studying?

Study XIII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Achaia. 17:16—18:18

First Day: The Witness Among the University Men. 17:16-21

Out of immediate danger of assassination Paul had now a breathing spell. He needed it, for the past months had been exceedingly strenuous, and he was about to begin in Corinth what was perhaps the most difficult piece of missionary work in his whole life.

Paul was accustomed to life in a university city, for he had been born in one. The art of Athens made little impression upon him, for he was a Jew, and the Jewish mind had been trained to regard graven images as a peril (Ex. 20:4; Josephus, *Wars* 1.32:2). Naturally it was the religious aspect of these works of art that appealed to Paul as he strolled about the city (v. 23), and the city appeared to him perilously "full of idols." Read vv. 16-18.

As usual he went straight to the ghetto and its synagogue. Notice, in v. 17, the two classes of persons whom he found there. In what other place did he deliver his message? To whom?

These daily discussions in the agora with university professors and students resulted in two opinions about him. The first was that he was a person who was hanging around a university center, picking up scraps of learning which he was anxious to air ("babbler"), an ignorant amateur trying to talk with specialists! Others took him more seriously as a propagandist of two new deities, Jesus and Anastasis ("resurrection"), or Jesus and the divinity that resurrected Him. This more serious estimate of Paul became dominant. He was too much in earnest to be disposed of in any jocular way. He was evidently a man who ought to be investigated by the Areopagites, the court responsible for the investigation of all new teaching. Read vv. 19-21.

In some crowded room or open portico of the agora, perhaps near the foot of the hill which gave the court its name, Paul stands up among representatives of the court of the Areopagus and a crowd of interested spectators, professors and students, to make an informal statement of his views, which will enable the court to ascertain whether any formal steps are necessary.

It is a man's dominant idea expressed naturally and without hesitation that tells how much and in what way his life is to count.

Chapters 16-18, A. D. 52-54 (Zahn); A. D. 47-49 (46-50) (Harnack).

Study XIII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Achaia. 17:16—18:18

Second Day: Paul's Testimony Before the Areopagites. 17:22-34

Read vv. 22-31, and compare it hastily with Paul's synagogue address in 13:16-41. What is the main theme of the address in Athens? Paul shows himself acquainted with the philosophical conceptions of the Stoics and Epicureans, and also with the cheaper, unphilosophical notions of the popular theology. Probably in the crowd both philosophers and populace were represented.

In a courteous introductory sentence he acknowledges that they are "unusually religious" (v. 22), inasmuch as in their desire to omit no god, or to appeal to the proper god, they have built an altar to "God Unknown" (v. 23). This altar gives him a text and perhaps suggests a defense, should one become necessary.

His first great idea is God—personal, supreme, and Creator of all things (v. 24). His statement involves the ascription to God of a more definite personality than the pantheistic Stoics admitted, and was opposed to the Epicurean theory, which, while considering the gods to be persons, relegated them to a blissful life among the stars, far away from the troubled earth and all its interests. This statement forbade ranking Him among the host of gods recognized by the people. Such a being cannot be thought of as living in a temple.

God is the personal sustainer of all life (v. 25). He keeps the seasons in their fruitful succession, the stars in their courses, the rivers running to the sea (cf. 14:15-17). He is not living a life of blissful indifference to the world, as do the gods of the Epicurean philosophers. On the other hand, neither does He need the food and drink offerings left by the people in their temples for the gods.

God made all nations of the same stock (v. 26) and left no room for the proud discrimination between "Greek and Barbarian."

God regulates the course of history (v. 26), assigning to each nation its period of culmination and decay, setting in motion and directing the great streams of immigration that have so changed history. Perhaps Paul appealed to Stoic cosmopolitanism.

Have you thought of the great tides of modern immigration as answering some great purpose of God, none the less because they occur in accordance with economic law?

STUDY XIII.— Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Achaia. 17:16—18:18

THIRD DAY: PAUL'S TESTIMONY BEFORE THE AREOPAGITES (*Concluded*). 17:22-34

God's purpose in directing the development of human civilization is to reveal Himself, and to enable individual men to find Him (v. 27). Capacity for intelligent prayer is a mark of high civilization. This rests on the supposition that God is very near to men (vv. 27-28). He has not fled to the stars to avoid men, as have the Epicurean gods.

"Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

Some of their own poets, one of them a Cilician like Paul, have recognized that God is the Father of men (v. 28). He has never grown weary of trying to make His dumb, deaf, blind children know that He is always near them.

Such a fatherly God cannot be properly represented by stone and metal, as the people suppose (v. 29). He is not statue-like.

A crisis is now at hand, in which it will become evident that God is not indifferent to this long failure to find Him and yield Him spiritual worship. God will judge the world (vv. 30-31).

And now Paul comes to his culmination—humanity in the hands of the resurrected Jesus (v. 31).

The general feeling was that one holding so absurd a notion as a judgment by a resurrected dead man was not to be taken seriously, and needed no further investigation. The idea of a resurrection was perhaps not so absolutely irreconcilable with Stoic thought, and some were inclined not to take it utterly as a jest. One Areopagite, a woman, and a few others were profoundly impressed.

It was doubtless a significant experience for Paul. His comment on it can be read between the lines of 1 Cor. 1:22-23, and 2:1-6 which refers directly to this period.

Perhaps in no age more than our own has it been essential to recognize the real strength of Paul's position, namely, that he could confront the philosophical theories and popular superstitions of his day with the report of a personal experience of increasing power over sin through association with Jesus Christ, which experience was intelligible to him in the light of certain historic facts in the career of Jesus of Nazareth.

Study XIII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Achaia. 17:16—18:18

Fourth Day: The Witness in the Great City. 18:1-18

From the university town Paul came to the great commercial center, Corinth, half-way between Rome and Ephesus. Here it was not university professors and students with whom he had to deal, but business men, sailors, porters, licentious women, slaves, people of the street and the wharf, rather than of the lecture-room and the library. Its spirit was that of keen commercialism, superficial but conceited culture and scandalous vice.

Paul came to Corinth in a disturbed state of mind. He came to the great city alone, which was no slight circumstance to one who loved company as well as he did (cf. 28:15; 17:15). He was in distress of mind about his church in Thessalonica, where he had been cruelly slandered. While still in Athens Timothy had come to him in response to his urgent summons (17:15), but had been immediately despatched to Thessalonica. Read 1 Thess. 3:1-5. Moreover, as we have just seen, his experience with the university people in Athens had not been reassuring and he perhaps doubted whether he would fare any better in Corinth. The athletic Greeks loved a fine presence and a graceful bearing, which Paul seems not to have had. They loved fine rhetorical phrasing in public speech, and this also Paul did not have. A considerable portion of the church, even in after years, were never satisfied with his "delivery" (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6). Read again 1 Cor. 2:1-4.

Paul's first care was to earn money for the heavy expense of Timothy's journey to Thessalonica and back, and also perhaps for one made by Silas from Berœa to Philippi. It is difficult to account for Silas during this period. Yet Paul had time to preach in the synagogue. Before Timothy and Silas arrived he had met two who were forever after to be his fast friends. Read vv. 1-6.

Most great deeds have been wrought in the face of great difficulties. If one can only be sure that he is allied with a great cause, difficulties need not discourage him.

Study XIII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Achaia. 17:16—18:18

Fifth Day: The Witness in the Great City (*Concluded*). 18:1-18

What two circumstances mentioned in vv. 7-8 tended to embitter the synagogue authorities? Read vv. 9-10, which show how desperate the situation had become. Paul evidently feared assassination or lynching, and began to think of abandoning the work. He was kept from doing this by nothing less than such a vision as he had in two other crises of his life (22:17-21; 23:11).

Soon after an incident occurred which completely discomfited the Jewish opposition. The new pro-consul, brother of the philosopher Seneca, utterly refused to hear the charges they brought against Paul and allowed the anti-Semites in the city to pound the newly elected leader of the ghetto in front of the bema itself. Read vv. 12-17. Gallio took a very different view of the situation from that which the officials in Philippi and Thessalonica had taken. He was convinced that the question was one which Roman law left within the jurisdiction of the Jewish authorities.

In spite of the misgivings with which Paul began his work in Corinth, he afterward looked back upon it with evident satisfaction. Read 1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 3:1-3; 12:11-12. The church was largely made up of people from the middle class (1 Cor. 1:26), but there were some distinguished exceptions: the leading man in the ghetto (v. 8), Titus Justus, whose house was big enough to accommodate large meetings (v. 7); the wealthy lady Chloe, with her slaves (1 Cor. 1:11); Stephanus, the hospitable entertainer (1 Cor. 16:15); Erastus, the city treasurer (Rom. 16:23). Slaves were found among the members (1 Cor. 7:21), and some degraded men were rescued from the lowest slums (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

The most wonderful fact about the great city was the presence of Jesus in it. Not only was He there, but He was full of hope for the city. He saw in its streets a multitude of people every day, some of them degraded men and women, who were recoverable and whom He already regarded as potentially His own (v. 10). What He needed in order to make them really His own was a suitable witness who would put himself at his Lord's disposal and die at his post if necessary.

Study XIII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Achaia. 17:16—18:18

Sixth Day: Paul Writes a Letter to the Thessalonian Believers from Corinth

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians throws so much light upon the situation in Acts that it should be briefly considered. It is evident from 1 Thess. 3:1 and 3:6 that the letter was written just after Timothy's arrival in Corinth (Acts 18:5). Its first purpose was to express Paul's great relief at finding them still holding fast to their new Christian profession. Read 3:1-10.

The second purpose was to deny the slanderous stories that his enemies were so industriously circulating about him in order to alienate his followers from him. These stories were probably being circulated by the Jews and by the unbelieving husbands and neighbors of Paul's converts among the Gentile ladies of the synagogue (Acts 17:4). These slanderers said that Paul was a fanatic ("error," 2:3), or a licentious man ("uncleanness," 2:3), or a tricky schemer ("guile," 2:3). His trickiness consisted especially in his scheming to get money from his converts (2:5-9). His dupes in Philippi had sent him money twice! (cf. Phil. 4:16). There were many adventurers abroad on the Egnatian Way, looking for chances to make easy money! Or he was ambitious to become the head of one of the many new fraternities (2:6-7). He had stayed long enough to get them into trouble, and had then run away! They said he did not care or dare to come back himself, but sent a cheap subordinate or substitute. Notice his exaltation of Timothy (3:2).

The gist of Paul's defense is in 2:3—3:10, as has just appeared. Now read the first chapter, noticing how, by quiet emphasis of the high character of his work among them, he leads up to the spirited defense in the second chapter.

"From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord" (1:8). The faithful lives of believers constitute a proclamation of the gospel. The report of what was going on in the lives of certain people in Thessalonica was the best possible advertisement of Paul's gospel. He needed not to speak anything (1:8). Draw near to God before you go out into the day, and let Him use your life, hour by hour, as a proclamation of His word of love.

A. D. 53 (Zahn); A. D. 48-49 (Harnack).

Study XIII.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Achaia. 17:16—18:18

Seventh Day: Paul Writes a Letter to the Thessalonian Believers from Corinth (*Concluded*)

A third purpose of the Letter was to give further teaching on some points which he had not had time to discuss before his hurried departure from Thessalonica, and to emphasize some things that he had said. There was always danger from the low conceptions of sexual morality that prevailed on every side (4: 2-8). The gospel contained some exciting truths, and there were some who dropped their regular work in their excited anticipation of the Lord's speedy return. They were in danger of becoming dependent on others, as well as failing to meet their business engagements with non-Christian business men (4: 11-12). Thessalonica was a city of large business interests, and there were probably numerous workmen among the believers.

Some of the Christians had lost friends by death and feared that, inasmuch as they had died before the Lord's return, they would lose their place in the kingdom that He was to inaugurate at His coming. (Read 4: 13-18.)

There were some ill-balanced, excited prophets who needed to be held in check by the church officers. But in restraining them the officers needed to be careful that they did not repress some genuine manifestation of the Spirit (5: 19), and that they did not allow abuses of the prophetic gift by the prophets to lead to an underestimate of the gift itself (5: 20). They were to exercise discrimination (5: 21). On the other hand, these prophets and all others needed to cultivate respect for church officials (5: 12-13).

Soon after writing this letter Paul seems to have written a second letter to the Thessalonians, which, however, throws little light on the narrative in Acts, and so need not be considered here.

"Build each other up" (5:11). It is the will of God that the Christian life be developed by the mutual influence of believers upon each other's lives. Some are ready to influence, but not to be influenced; to give, but not to receive. Are you ready to do both?

Study XIV.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Asia. 18:18—19:20

First Day: Paul Revisits Jerusalem and South Galatia. 18:18-23

Read vv. 18-23. There was no occasion for such a premature departure from Corinth as had been necessary in Thessalonica, and Paul was able to leave behind him a large, well-organized church. What business called him back to Syria, we do not know. Just before he went on shipboard in one of the harbor towns of Corinth he had his head shaved, in fulfillment of some vow that he had made to God. Perhaps it was connected with the final completion of his perilous Corinthian campaign. On his way to Syria Paul touched at Ephesus, the metropolis of the Roman province Asia. Note, in 16:6, the evidence that this great province and city had earlier seemed to him an inviting, but for some reason a forbidden, field. Note here, in v. 21, Paul's evident remembrance of this earlier experience. He had time for one or two discourses in the ghetto, and left behind him, as industrious propagandists, the Jewish friends who had stayed loyally by him during the Corinthian dangers.

Perhaps, with many other Jewish pilgrims, if it were some Jewish feast that called Paul to Syria, he sailed through the gateway of the great artificial harbor at Cæsarea and went on shore. Note, in 8:40 and chapter 10, the friends he might hope to find here. The expression "went up and saluted the church" (v. 22) seems hardly the natural description of a visit to the church in Cæsarea, and indicates rather a trip to Jerusalem. After some days in Jerusalem, he went to Antioch on the Orontes, his "home church," and after some weeks or months there started again for a third visit to his numerous churches in South Galatia. Glance at 13:14, 51; 14:6 to recall the cities that had been centers of his extensive South Galatian work. Glance at 16:6 where his second visit to that part of the world is mentioned.

"He reasoned with the Jews" (v. 19). Christianity involves a mystical experience with Jesus Christ, resting on a rational basis and issuing in an ethical result.

Study XIV.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Asia. 18:18—19:20

Second Day: Paul's Letter to the Galatians

At some time in this general period of Paul's life he wrote his celebrated letter to the Galatian churches. It is sometimes assigned to the weeks of Paul's residence in Syrian Antioch, mentioned yesterday (Acts 18:23), in which case, of course, the letter was soon followed by Paul himself. It is sometimes thought to have been written earlier, during the first weeks in Corinth, before Silas and Timothy reached him (Acts 18:1-4), for no names are coupled with his own in the opening of the letter (Gal. 1:1). If this were the date, it would be the oldest of Paul's extant letters. But Gal. 1:2 indicates that more Christians were with him at the time of writing than can be supposed to have been at Corinth during those early weeks. The situation implied in Gal. 1:2 is well met by the supposition that it is the overwhelming moral force of all the great Antioch church that he brings to bear upon the Galatian churches in the indignant remonstrance so vehemently expressed in this letter. Supposing it, then, to have been written in Antioch (Acts 18:18), there is time to look at a few of its salient features, without taking time to read it through.

Paul had visited the Galatian churches twice when he wrote the letter (Gal. 4:13, "former time," margin R. V.). The latter of these two visits was the one described in Acts 16:6, when Paul carried to them the deliverances of the Jerusalem council, declaring that no Gentile believer need be circumcised, in order to be a Christian. Paul knew how bitterly unreconciled to this deliverance the Pharisees who had fought it in the council were. He anticipated that before long they would visit South Galatia, and in some way try to make Jewish proselytes of the Galatian Christians. He forewarned the Galatian churches against such an effort when he left the decrees of the council with them. He alludes to this forewarning in his letter. Read Gal. 1:6-10, especially v. 9.

"A bond-servant of Christ" (v. 10). The last clause of Gal. 2:20 shows why a high-spirited man like Paul could use such language.

STUDY XIV.—Paul and his Associates Carry the Testimony into Asia. 18:18—19:20

THIRD DAY: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS (*Continued*)

In spite of Paul's forewarning, the Jerusalem Pharisees found the Galatian Christians an easy prey when, a year or two later, they came among them on their destructive errand. This was partly because of the sly way in which they came. They did not come directly contradicting the decree of the Jerusalem council. They did not say that it was impossible to become a Christian without becoming a Jewish proselyte. They simply said that if a man wished to be a first-class Christian he must be a circumcised Jewish proselyte. What they said can only be guessed by noticing Paul's replies, just as one can guess what has been said at one end of the telephone line by listening to the replies at the other end. They probably emphasized the fact that Jesus Himself had been circumcised (Gal. 4:4-5). They asserted that Paul preached an uncircumcised Christianity, simply because he thought it would be popular among the Gentiles (1:10); that he really believed in circumcision (5:11). He had circumcised his special friend Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), but he had "shut out" the ordinary Gentile Christians from first-class Christianity (4:17).

Furthermore, they said that Paul was a mere subordinate of the Twelve who had taught him all that was true in his gospel and who did not really approve of the peculiar features he had added. Read rapidly, with these thoughts in mind, Gal. 1:11—2:14.

The letters of Paul are the letters of a busy missionary writing in the midst of arduous labors, or sometimes in the enforced leisure of an imprisonment. Paul threw himself unsparingly into the work of meeting the needs of men without thought of literary fame, but because of the experience gained in this way he was chosen by the Spirit of God to put the gospel into the literary form in which it has been most effectively presented to irreligious men ever since.

Is it not wise for us, in making our life plans, to try simply to meet the sorest and most immediate need of men, regardless of possible fame or position?

Study XIV.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Asia. 18:18—19:20

Fourth Day: Paul's Letter to the Galatians (*Concluded*)

Paul attacks the motives of these missionaries of Pharisaism. They seem to him to be simply using Gentile Christianity as a bait by which to draw Gentiles into the ranks of Jewish proselytes. They wish to boast among the Jerusalem rabbis of their success in making Jewish proselytes (6:13), and so escape any unpopularity that they might incur among non-Christian Jews because of their Christianity (6:12). They had begun somewhat disingenuously to urge the observance of certain feast days (4:10-11) and had been urging circumcision without making clear all that the rite involved (5:2-3).

Over against their general advocacy of circumcision Paul asserts that one thing only can result in "justification"—that is, in being accounted righteous or forgiven, and so being "saved"—and that one thing is believing in Jesus Christ. Believing in Jesus Christ means accepting Him as what He represents Himself to be and treating Him accordingly, namely, surrendering to Him as Lord the control of one's life. This act brings a man under Jesus' personal influence and the purifying power of His personal friendship (2:20). This personal friendship with the Spirit of God in Christ is the highest blessedness conceivable. It is the experience promised by God all through the ages since Abraham as the culmination of blessedness (3:2, 14). No surgical operation like circumcision can add anything to it (3:3).

The need of circumcision and the Mosaic law has passed away. Jesus Christ in His death has made an exhibition of the loving heart of God, which prohibits sin far more effectively than the law ever did (2:20-21; 3:23-25).

"The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (2:20). A true test of character is the way in which one responds to love. As He "gave Himself up" for us, so we may gladly and confidently give ourselves up for Him.

Study XIV.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Asia. 18:18—19:20

Fifth Day: The Development of Rudimentary Witnesses in Ephesus. 18:24—19:7

Paul followed his letter into South Galatia, and it is to be hoped found that it had prepared the way for his coming to "establish all the disciples" (18:23). Then he went westward into the province of Asia and came to Ephesus, where he found a group of men in a stage of religious experience rather difficult to understand. Before his arrival his two friends, Aquila and Priscilla, had found a talented Jew in about the same stage of experience. Read 18:24-28.

Perhaps Luke's reason for bringing Apollos into his narrative is the fact that there had been those in Corinth who thought more highly of Apollos than they did of Paul (1 Cor. 1:12), and it gave him satisfaction to show that Apollos had been brought into the higher Christian experience by Paul's friends and had been introduced to the church in Corinth by them.

We need to remember that Christian truth had not yet assumed any fixed literary form. Many of those who were interested in the movement were, of necessity, very imperfectly informed regarding it. Through some traveling Christian they had learned about various phases of it, or possibly through some one of the many inadequate written gospels that were at one time current in the church (Luke 1:1). In any case, these men in Ephesus knew nothing about the experience described in the second chapter of Acts.

When they learned more about the resurrected Jesus and gave themselves up to Him as their living Lord (v. 5), they had an experience of spiritual exhilaration which resulted in ecstatic ejaculations and in sudden temporary inspirations which enabled them to deliver messages from God's Spirit in the public meetings (v. 6).

"Instructed in the way of the Lord"; "fervent in spirit" (18:25). Do not be afraid to cultivate an enthusiasm based on knowledge. See that you have such knowledge as will beget enthusiasm. Let every wise plan for the extension of God's kingdom have your enthusiastic support.

Chapter 19, A. D. 55-57 (Zahn); A. D. 50-53 (49-52) (Harnack).

Study XIV.—Paul and his Associates Carry the Testimony into Asia. 18:18—19:20

Sixth Day: The Testimony Overcomes Superstition in Asia. 19:8-20

Luke has pictured Paul in Athens, the university city; in Corinth, the great commercial center; and now the victory in which the word of God prevails is won in Ephesus, the great center of oriental superstition. Read vv. 8-10, noting as usual the two classes of people to whom the testimony was delivered, and the wide extent of territory covered. How was the work probably carried on in the other cities and villages of the province?

One manuscript represents Paul to have occupied the lecture-room of the professor of rhetoric from 11 a. m. to 4 p. m., that is, during the heat of the day, when most men rested (Ramsay). Paul probably worked at his trade until 11 o'clock (20: 34-35), and then began lecturing, sometimes continuing his discussions far into the night (20: 31). What expression in v. 10 indicates Luke's dominant interest?

Read vv. 11-12. These phenomena were especially calculated to appeal to those who had been impressed by performances of the magicians. The healings may have taken place in accordance with psychic laws through which "God wrought."

Read the humorous incident described in vv. 13-17. There had been Jews of Palestine in Jesus' day who dealt more or less in magical incantations. Cf. Matt. 12: 27. Certain relatives of the high priest's family here in Ephesus were engaging in religious or pseudo-religious practices with the same commercial spirit that seems to have characterized the heads of the family in Jerusalem. In the crazy man's attack upon his would-be healers the power of Jesus was proven to the citizens of Ephesus in a way suited to their habits of thought.

"The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified" (v. 17). Sooner or later into every great movement for the uplift of society comes the recognition of the part played in it by "the Lord Jesus." Centuries pass, but He stands foremost in every advance of humanity.

Study XIV.—Paul and His Associates Carry the Testimony into Asia. 18:18—19:20

Seventh Day: The Testimony Overcomes Superstition in Asia (*Concluded*). 19:8-20. Paul Writes to the Christians in Corinth.

The work of reformation among the Ephesian magicians was thorough. It made these men cut off all possibility of returning to their dark ways. Read vv. 18-19. If a "piece of silver" was a denarius or drachma, the amount equaled about 50,000 days' wages (cf. Matt. 20:2), that is, between $50,000 and $100,000.

Verse 20 closes the fifth great division of the book of Acts, 16:6—19:20. Look back for a moment over the titles of the daily lessons in Studies XII, XIII, XIV and note the progress of the narrative. What has been Luke's dominant idea in this division? In determining the trend of thought note the significant statement in 19:21.

During these three years (20:31) in Ephesus Paul carried on a spirited correspondence with the church in Corinth, and perhaps made them one short visit in which he endeavored to overcome the opposition to himself that had been stirred up probably by the Jerusalem Pharisees who had created the disturbance in South Galatia. Paul handles them without gloves in 2 Cor. 11:4-15. All that is extant of this interesting correspondence is the so-called First Letter to the Corinthians and possibly chapters 9-13 of Second Corinthians.

A fundamental source of weakness in the lives of some professing Christians is their unreadiness to cut entirely loose from whatever might lead them easily back into the old life. For all such there is an inspiring suggestion in the picture of this group of Ephesian Christians standing about the burning books, their determined faces lighted by the flames that were consuming what might easily be a source of temptation to them. The possession of power in the Christian life is conditioned upon unreserved renunciation of all that ministers to evil. "Abhor that which is evil."

PART VI

THE TESTIMONY FINALLY ESTABLISHED BY PAUL UNDER GOD'S DIRECTION IN ROME, THE CENTER OF THE GENTILE WORLD, IN SPITE OF FIERCE JEWISH OPPOSITION. 19:21—28:31.

STUDY XV.—Paul Closes His Asiatic Work and Starts for Jerusalem by Way of Macedonia and Achaia. 19:21—20:5.

STUDY XVI.—After Many Warnings on the Way, Paul Faces Death in Jerusalem. 20:6—22:22.

STUDY XVII.—After Two Years of Suspense in Prison Paul Appeals to the Emperor. 22:23—25:12.

STUDY XVIII.—A Last Famous Testimony in Cæsarea and a Perilous Voyage to Rome. 25:13—28:16.

STUDY XIX.—The Testimony Finally Established in the Capital of the World. 28:17-31.

Study XV.—Paul Closes His Asiatic Work and Starts for Jerusalem by Way of Macedonia and Achaia. 19:21—20:5

First Day: The Ephesian Opposition in a Frenzy. 19:21-41

Read 19:21, in which the author forecasts the substance of the last great section of his history. Two associates precede Paul into Macedonia, to insure such preparation for his coming as will enable him to accomplish as much as possible in the short time he will be able to devote to each church. Read v. 22.

Now follows a paragraph (vv. 23-41) which Luke's dramatic sense leads him to place at the forefront of this last section. The section is to record a succession of perilous experiences through which Paul passes on his way to Rome, and a howling crowd of frenzied Artemis worshipers passing across the stage prepares the reader for the dangers that are to follow. Read vv. 23-41.

It is not the priests or the political custodians of the popular religion that oppose Paul. From what class does the opposition come? To what two, or three, motives do they appeal?

Luke is interested to show in this impressive way how conspicuously successful the new movement has been in the entire province. The shrine market was seriously depressed! These miniature temples were sold in great numbers, to be used as votive offerings in the temple, or to be kept at home, or to be placed in the graves of deceased friends (Ramsay). In response to the impassioned appeal of the shrine-maker, some one raised the sacred Artemis cry, and the company started for the great open-air theatre, from which perhaps the venerated temple of Artemis could be seen. Great numbers hearing the Artemis cry joined the crowd, not knowing what had gathered it. On their way to the theatre the leaders captured some of Paul's company, as they had doubtless planned to do.

Greed for money and religious pride find themselves hard pressed by the democratic spirit of Jesus, who works always for the enlargement of the liberty of all men and against the special privileges of a few.

Study XV.—Paul Closes His Asiatic Work and Starts for Jerusalem by Way of Macedonia and Achaia. 19:21—20:5

Second Day: The Ephesian Opposition in a Frenzy (*Concluded*). 19:21-41

In the great amphitheatre the leaders of the ghetto, fearful that the crowd might confuse them with the Christians, brought a Jew named Alexander down from the seats to the stage to explain that they were not offenders. If he were the person mentioned later by Paul (2 Tim. 4:14) he was a coppersmith, and may not have been too orthodox a Jew to have profited by the shrine trade! The sight of one who was a Jew and who was, therefore, known not to be an Artemis worshiper simply enraged the crowd, and for two hours in a religious frenzy they shouted the Artemis cry. This cry must have been something sufficiently rhythmical to lend itself to repeated utterance, like the cries of the dervishes of the East to-day. One manuscript has a reading which suggests the exact words: "Megá-le Ar-te-mis" ("Great Diana"). Finally one of the officials succeeded in bringing the exhausted men out of their frenzy and made a rational statement that dispersed them all to their homes. What was the substance of his argument? Do you see any other reason than personal friendship that may have made the Asiarchs wish to keep Paul out of the theatre? Cf. 16:37-39. Soon after a meeting, very different from that in the amphitheatre, was held in some commodious place—perhaps in some retired spot outside the city under the open sky. Read 20:1, and let your imagination picture what took place in this meeting.

"Paul, having sent for the disciples and exhorted them, took leave of them" (20:1). The great apostle had labored famously in the province, but the ultimate responsibility for the perpetuation and propagation of the movement rested upon ordinary disciples. It is the testimony by deed and word of the ordinary Christian that keeps Christianity alive in the world.

Study XV.—Paul Closes His Asiatic Work and Starts for Jerusalem by Way of Macedonia and Achaia. 19:21—20:5

Third Day: Paul Revisits Macedonia and Again Writes to the Christians in Corinth. 20:1-5

Luke here passes summarily over a period of great interest in Paul's personal experience, because the period furnished little that was of importance for Luke's purpose. We know from Paul's extant correspondence with the Corinthian church that he left Ephesus in great distress of mind over the situation in Corinth. His relations with the Corinthian church had become so strained that it was doubtful whether they would receive him if he visited them. He had sent one of his lieutenants, named Titus, to bring about a better understanding in the Corinthian church, and expected to receive a report from him in the city of Troas, where Paul, on his way from Ephesus to Macedonia, had agreed to meet him. Titus failed to meet him there and, although the city presented an excellent opportunity for evangelistic work, Paul was too much worried to utilize it. Read 2 Cor. 2:12-13. He went on into Macedonia, doubtless visiting Philippi and Thessalonica. Somewhere in Macedonia Titus met him with a report from Corinth that greatly relieved his mind. He immediately wrote 2 Corinthians, or at least chapters 1-9. (Chapters 10-13 were very possibly part of a separate letter written earlier in Ephesus, and were later put by the Corinthian church with chapters 1-9.) Read 2 Cor. 7:5-16.

During this hurried journey through Macedonia and Achaia Paul was busily engaged in an enterprise not described in the book of Acts. He was collecting a large sum of money from all the Gentile churches for the relief of the many needy Christians in the Jerusalem church. It was gathered from churches as far apart as South Galatia and Corinth (see 1 Cor. 16:1). In the letter to the Roman Christians, written about this time, Paul states the purpose of the collection. Read Romans 15:25-27. He hoped that the gift would bind the two elements in the church together. Romans 15:30-31.

"Without were fightings, within were fears" (2 Cor. 7:5). We are not spared temporary distress and anxiety any more than was Paul, but these may be made to us, as to him, valuable experiences, because they prepare us to receive God's comfort (7:6).

A. D. 57 (Zahn); A. D. 53 (52) (Harnack).

Study XV.—Paul Closes His Asiatic Work and Starts for Jerusalem by Way of Macedonia and Achaia. 19:21—20:5

Fourth Day: Paul's Appeal to the Corinthian Christians for Money. *2 Cor.* 8—9

Before leaving the subject of the collection which bulked so large in Paul's mind at this time, read rapidly chapters 8-9 of the Second Letter to the Corinthians, which show a masterly knowledge of human nature and the motives to which it responds. Read the chapters as a psychological study, and if ever in the future you have occasion to make an appeal for money you will do well to return to these chapters for suggestions. Note that Paul uses lower motives as well as the highest.

"See that you abound in this grace also" (8:7). Paul ranks Christian giving with the fundamental Christian virtues, faith, knowledge, earnestness, love. Do you desire an increase of the spirit of generous giving just as really as you desire an increase of faith? Are you employing any means to secure it?

Study XV.—Paul Closes His Asiatic Work and Starts for Jerusalem by Way of Macedonia and Achaia. 19:21—20:5

Fifth Day: Paul Revisits Achaia and Writes to the Christians in Rome. 20:1-5

It is to be hoped that when Paul reached Corinth he found them ready with their money! The reconciliation with them after the trying period of their estrangement from him must have been very satisfactory to both parties.

It was apparently near the close of these winter months in Corinth that Paul wrote the most famous of all his extant literary products, the letter to the Christians in Rome. There is time only to note its general setting and purpose. First note the evidence, in Rom. 15:25-26, that the letter was written at the time just suggested.

It becomes apparent also from 15:23-28 that Paul had begun to plan a Spanish mission. Since he must report to his Lord that he had preached the gospel to the Gentiles of the entire empire, it was necessary that he should go to the western edge of the world. Perhaps he thought he could send lieutenants into Britain. To succeed in Spain, he must be sure of his relation to the church in Rome.

Since it was so important that the Roman Christians should sympathetically support him in his Spanish mission, he took pains to acquaint them thoroughly with his views. He had learned from bitter experience in South Galatia and Corinth the points at which his theological opponents could misrepresent him. Very likely he suspected that those whom he had just driven from the field in Corinth would hurry to Rome when they learned of his plan for a Spanish mission, in order to prejudice the Roman church against him. In order to prevent this he wrote a full statement of such of his views as were most fundamental and most liable to misrepresentation. See how the memory of misrepresentation appears in Romans 3:7-8; 6:1; 6:15, 7:7, 13; 9:1-3.

"I am a debtor both to Greeks and barbarians" (Rom. 1:14). Paul felt that all men had a right to know the facts about Jesus Christ and His salvation. That there should be good tidings in the world from God for all men, and some men not know them, seemed to him an intolerable thought.

A. D. 58 (Zahn); A. D. 53-54 (52-53) (Harnack).

Study XV.—Paul Closes His Asiatic Work and Starts for Jerusalem by Way of Macedonia and Achaia. 19:21—20:5

Sixth Day: Paul Revisits Achaia and Writes to the Christians in Rome (*Concluded*). 20:1-5

Paul's Letter to the Roman Christians breaks up into several sections which you will not have time now to read. In chapters 1-5 he shows that all men need God's forgiveness, and that those who turn from their sins and give themselves in penitent faith to the control of the personal revelation of God made by the crucified Jesus receive God's loving forgiveness. Read 5:1-11, in which the thought of the section is summed up.

In chapters 6-8 Paul describes the triumphant life which the Holy Spirit of God enables the forgiven disciple of Jesus to live. Read 8:12-17, 38-39.

In chapters 9-11 Paul discusses the perplexing fact that God's own chosen people have, as a nation, rejected God's Messiah. He maintains that this situation is no surprise to God (read 9:6); he shows what the national fault has been (read 9:30—10:4); and prophesies that the nation will in time accept Jesus as its Messiah (read 11:25-27).

In chapters 12-16 Paul takes up very incisively the ethical side of Christianity, discusses with great practical wisdom difficulties that are apt to arise in church life (e. g., 14:1-6), and speaks more personally of his own immediate plans and prospects (e. g., 15:22-29).

"The word is nigh thee." Read Rom. 10:8-9. Each moment is a fresh opportunity for a man to connect himself with Jesus as Lord and to enter at once upon an eternal career. Jesus Christ's eternity has already begun. Accustom yourself to think of your non-Christian friend as eligible for such an experience now, and your prayer and effort for him will gain in expectancy.

Study XV.—Paul Closes His Asiatic Work and Starts for Jerusalem by Way of Macedonia and Achaia. 19:21—20:5

Seventh Day: Paul Starts for Jerusalem. 20:1-5

After Paul had come to an amicable understanding with the Corinthian Christians, had received their offering for the Jerusalem church, and had provided for the Spanish mission by writing to the Christians in Rome, he engaged passage for Palestine. Suddenly he became aware that among his prospective fellow-passengers were a number of bigoted Jewish Passover pilgrims who planned to assassinate him on the voyage. His success in winning back the Corinthian church, his ambitious plans for further work in Spain, his masterly effort to conciliate the conservative Jewish element in Jerusalem by his gift from Gentile Christendom, made them desperate. He gave up his passage probably at the last moment and went northward by land into Macedonia. Read v. 3.

In v. 4 appear the names of the committee appointed by the contributing churches to carry their gift to Jerusalem. Note the places from which they come. Provision had been previously made by Paul for such a committee. Read 1 Cor. 16:3.

It is uncertain to how many persons the word "these" in v. 5 refers. Note also that possibly the phrase, "as far as Asia" (v. 4), ought to be omitted. The sudden discovery of the plot to assassinate Paul may have disarranged the plans of the various members of the committee.

Note the occurrence again of the pronouns "us" and "we" in vv. 5-6, and compare with 16:17; 17:1. Luke seems to have rejoined the party at the place where he left Paul some years before.

Paul was able, in the midst of so many distractions, to write such a letter as that to the Romans, because the great thoughts expressed in that letter were the permanent furniture of his mind. Keeping one's mind steadily on certain great ideas and one's life steadily responsive to them makes great achievements possible under conditions that would seem likely to render any successful effort impossible.

STUDY XVI.—After Many Warnings on the Way, Paul Faces Death in Jerusalem. 20:6—22:22

FIRST DAY: THE REMARKABLE INCIDENT IN TROAS. 20:6-16

Read v. 6. The "days of unleavened bread" would be of significance to Christians as the anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and Jewish Christians would naturally continue their pre-Christian observance of these days with a devotion increased by the Christian associations connected with the period. Read vv. 7-12, and note evidence that the author was an eye-witness.

Note in 2 Cor. 2:12-13 the reason for Paul's wishing to spend a full week here, although hurrying to Jerusalem (Acts 20:16). The first day of the week (v. 7) seems already to have become the day for Christian meetings instead of the Jewish Sabbath. Cf. 1 Cor. 16:2. The "breaking of bread" seems to have been connected with the observance of the Lord's Supper. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:16. The mention of "many lights" in v. 8 is perhaps an assurance that there could have been no such immoral practices as were sometimes charged against Christians. (Cf. 1 Thess. 2:3, "uncleanness.") Or it may be to account for the lad's sleepiness.

Does the author think that this lad (v. 9) was dead? Did Paul consider him to be dead? The people were about to raise the death-wail over him (v. 10).

Trace the route (vv. 13-15) on the map. Did Paul's desire to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost (v. 16) have any connection with the delivery of the money collected from the western churches?

Imagine the conversation of this group of Christian gentlemen sailing over these blue waters, made memorable by their voyage! We naturally think of Paul as a companionable man, for true Christian culture develops qualities that make one companionable.

Study XVI.—After Many Warnings on the Way, Paul Faces Death in Jerusalem. 20:6—22:22

Second Day: Farewell to Asia. 20:17-38

Paul felt that his work in this part of the world was over. He had, perhaps during his recent three months in Greece (20:3), even entered Illyricum, and there was no longer any place for him in these regions. Read Romans 15:18-23. He does not expect to come this way again before he meets his Lord. Read Acts 20:25, 38. Therefore, it is through the elders of the metropolitan church in Ephesus that he sends his farewell to Asia. They are to be leaders in the Christian work of the province. Read vv. 17-35, regarding them as reporting the retrospect and prospect of a great witness, and confine your attention for the present to that which stands out clearly in retrospect only.

What did Paul conceive his life-work to be? How came this to be his life-work?

What is the "gospel of the grace of God" (v. 24)? And how does one "testify" to it?

Jesus Christ had given Paul his life commission, not because of any special favor with which He regarded Paul. Jesus had been moved to the unusual demonstration on the Damascus road because of His habitual "compassion on the multitudes." "To this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness" to the multitudes in darkness (Acts 26:16-18). Have you ever taken seriously your life commission from Jesus Christ? Do you "minister" in any way to anybody? And do you have anything of importance to which you can "testify" as a "witness"?

Study XVI.—After Many Warnings on the Way, Paul Faces Death in Jerusalem. 20:6—22:22

Third Day: Farewell to Asia (*Concluded*). 20:17-38

Read vv. 17-38 again, noting what were the salient features in Paul's prospect. To what is he looking forward?

Evidently there is plenty of trouble ahead. The local prophets in every church that he visited warned him that this was the case (v. 23). He could already feel in spirit the pressure of bonds upon his body (v. 22). There was also danger ahead for the church. Wolfish persons from without would savagely attack the faith of the church as such persons had recently done in Corinth (v. 29). Within the church ambitious persons would try to gather parties to follow their leadership (v. 30).

Paul faced this dark prospect with composure and good cheer because of two considerations. One of them appears in v. 28. What is it? The other appears in v. 32, "the word of his grace," that is, the message of his kindness, namely, the gospel. Paul felt that this message was so adapted to human need that men could be relied on to accept it and be built up by it out of weakness into power, out of sin into righteous living. There would always be among the children of men a church illustrating that which had been the dominant characteristic of the life of Jesus, namely, the joyful helping of the weak. There would always be men and women being trained in the unselfish use of power.

After the retrospect and prospect these men, who were bound together by the strongest ties that bind men in time or eternity, kneeled before the Lord who gave them their unity, rose up, kissed their friend and parted from him for a season (vv. 36-38),

The dominant spirit of Christianity may be expressed in homely fashion by the simple word, HELP. "Ye ought to HELP the weak" (v. 35). To help them become strong, of course.

Study XVI.—After Many Warnings on the Way, Paul Faces Death in Jerusalem. 20:6—22:22

Fourth Day: The Witness Advancing Toward Peril. 21:1-14

Luke, with keen literary instinct, so selects and arranges his material as to prepare his reader for the great peril that awaits Paul in Jerusalem. Read vv. 1-14, noting the impressiveness with which the local prophets warn Paul of the approaching crisis.

We have already noted the chance afforded Luke in Cæsarea (v. 8) to gain first-hand information regarding the events described in chapters 8 and 10. Paul had once chased Philip out of Jerusalem (8:1-5)! Luke had here also an impressive illustration of the activity of Christian women. His gospel surpasses others in the prominence that it gives to women.

In Cæsarea a prophet from Judæa itself came to meet them and showed Paul how he would soon look as a captive in Jerusalem. He used the ominous words, "deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." The words seem to imply the execution of a death sentence. Cf. Luke 18:32, where Jesus used the words in this sense.

It was not too late for Paul to turn back. Agabus made it evident that the Jerusalem brethren did not expect him to come farther. The committee could deliver the money to the church. The members of the committee with the local Cæsarean friends unite in beseeching Paul not to go farther (v. 12). Paul himself knew well the fanatical temper of the city, especially at this sacred season of the religious year. Those who planned his assassination in Corinth (20:3) would be waiting for him in Jerusalem. He knew that it was the slaughter city of God's prophets, a city some of whose principal points of interest were the tombs of the great men of God that it had murdered. And now the city sat in sullen, vindictive hate, quiet but alert, to seize him as its latest victim. Luke with evident pride in his hero reports Paul's decisive reply (vv. 13-14).

"Ready . . . to die . . . for the name of the Lord Jesus" (v. 13). A characteristic of our Christian faith is the affection of its adherents for a person. They do not merely venerate His memory or adopt the principles He taught, but they love Him as a present reality in their lives.

Study XVI.—After Many Warnings on the Way, Paul Faces Death in Jerusalem. 20:6—22:22

Fifth Day: Paul Reaches Jerusalem and Makes an Extreme Effort to Conciliate Jewish Opposition. 21:15-26

From Cæsarea the committee went probably on horseback to Jerusalem, stopping, according to one manuscript, one night on the way with one who had very early become a Christian and who probably gave Luke valuable information for his history. Read vv. 15-16.

Representatives of the Jerusalem church hospitably met the distinguished travelers, and conducted them to the lodgings that had been prepared for them. The very next day James, the Lord's brother, and his board of elders, gave them a formal reception. None of the Twelve seem to have been in Jerusalem. Read vv. 17-18.

They evidently approve of Paul and his work, but there are tens of thousands ("myriads") of Christian Pharisees now visiting the city to attend the Pentecostal festival who regard Paul as an enemy of God and wish that he were dead. James believes that this feeling is due to their misunderstanding of Paul, and he suggests an action by which Paul can correct this misconception without in the least compromising the liberty of his Gentile converts over the world. Read vv. 20-25. James' suggestion was that Paul should meet the expenses connected with the accomplishment of the Nazirite vow in the case of four orthodox Jewish Christians, join them in their final ceremonies, and so show that he encourages obedience rather than disobedience to the Mosaic law in the case of Jewish Christians. Paul was accustomed to conform his conduct to Jewish ideals when he lived among Jews (1 Cor. 9:19-20) and so assented. Read v. 26.

Was Paul's real attitude toward the Mosaic law what James seems to have thought it to be? Cf. 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:15. Where did he get the money with which to meet the expenses of the vow?

Paul had come to Jerusalem bent on doing everything he could to bring the Jewish and Gentile elements into closer sympathy, and went to the very verge of consistency in accomplishing his purpose.

Even the best intentions are sometimes misunderstood, and those who suffer under such circumstances can only patiently take what comes. Some time the misunderstanding will be cleared away.

A. D. 58 (Zahn); A. D. 54 (53) (Harnack).

Study XVI.—After Many Warnings on the Way, Paul Faces Death in Jerusalem. 20:6—22:22

Sixth Day: Facing Death. 21:27-36

Ordinary Jewish Christians, who were ready, like the "myriads" of v. 20, to keep the Mosaic law, were no longer offensive to the non-Christian Jews. They were no longer "persecuted for the cross of Christ." (Gal. 6:12.) Such tolerance, however, did not extend to Paul, whose heinous offense it was to encourage Gentile Christians to look for the Kingdom of God without keeping the Mosaic law. He was bitterly hated all up and down the Jewish world. He had not been long in the city of Jerusalem before this bitter hate assaulted and nearly killed him. Some of his old Jewish enemies from Asia saw him in the temple precincts at the time of his Nazirite vow. They had, a little before, seen him in the streets of the city with the Asiatic Gentile, Trophimus, one of the committee. Their prejudice instantly leaped to the conclusion that he had taken him into that part of the temple area which Gentiles were forbidden, under penalty of death, to enter. He was not only crowding Gentiles into the church, but into the holy temple itself! They circulated this report, and in a few hours crowds of maddened Jews were racing through the narrow streets toward the southeast quarter where the temple stood. Every one was looking for Paul, and when finally some one recognized him in one of the temple colonnades they pounced upon him and dragged him out of the temple area into the city street. The temple police instantly closed the gates leading from the city into the temple court, and Paul was face to face with death. Read vv. 27-31.

Claudius Lysias, the chiliarch, in the Roman barracks nearby heard that there was a riot. He came on the run with several captains and a detachment of soldiers, forced his way through the crowd, and in a moment Paul was between two soldiers, chained to each. The soldiers lifted him from his feet, and the mob surged toward the barracks steps. Read vv. 31-36.

Unreadiness to surrender special privileges or eagerness to secure them is a tap-root of evil. "Away with him" (v. 36) they said also of Him who died to make special privileges the common prerogative of all.

Study XVI.—After Many Warnings on the Way, Paul Faces Death in Jerusalem. 20:6—22:22

Seventh Day: Paul's Testimony Before His Countrymen. 21:37—22:22

Paul's ability to speak Greek convinced the chiliarch that his prisoner was not a certain famous insurgent whom he was hoping to arrest. Paul's master passion was the testimony, and this was a chance. His readiness to speak surprised the mob into silence, which was deepened when they found that, though a foreign-born Jew, he could use the Aramaic vernacular. Read 21:37—22:2. Judge from Rom. 9:1-5 what his frame of mind was.

Read now 22:3-21, noting Paul's emphasis of all details that had a conciliatory tendency, especially vv. 3, 5, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20. Paul shows that he is no hater of his nation, as he is supposed to be (21:28). It was against his preference, and in obedience to a direct command of God, that he went among the Gentiles. The offensive word "Gentiles" was tactfully withheld until the very end, but when at last it did come out it aroused their fury (v. 22). The same evil spirit that had shrieked and yelled for the blood of Jesus when He stood against the desire of the priest and rabbi for special privileges was still in the heart of the city. Paul turned sorrowfully into the barracks, and the city blindly faced its approaching doom.

"Thou shalt be a witness for him" (v. 15). Our mission is to call the attention of men in a convincing way, by a convincing life and words, to the existence of an invisible Christ. We are to live our lives with such constant reference to the Invisible Presence that those who do not see or know Him shall come to think of Him as a reality.

Study XVII.—After Two Years of Suspense in Prison Paul Appeals to the Emperor. 22:23—25:12

First Day: Preliminary Examinations. 22:23—23:10

Inside the barracks Paul's back was at once bared, his hands stretched above his head and tied to the whipping-post ready for the scourging thongs. Read vv. 24-29. Note the quiet pride with which Paul meets the chiliarch's suspicion that he is too poor to have been able to purchase citizenship. Stanch Pharisees, such as Paul's ancestors were, would hardly have purchased citizenship. It was probably conferred upon them for some distinguished service to the state.

The chiliarch proposed to find out from the Jewish sanhedrin what crime the prisoner had committed. Read 23:1-10, remembering that Paul, if not at one time a member of the sanhedrin, had, as a rabbinical student (22:3), often attended its sessions. What policy did Paul pursue in making his defense?

The statement in v. 1 applies to his career as a Christian, which was the period under discussion.

The Jews whitened the walls (v. 3) of their rock grave-chambers (Matt. 23:27), so that men might see them in the night and not be defiled by touching them.

Paul's reply (v. 5) might be translated: "I did not know that he was a high priest." He had heard a voice commanding that he be struck, but he had not seen who spoke. With reference to any member of the high priest's family (called high priests; cf. v. 14) Paul would not have used such language, and frankly apologized.

Paul appealed to the fact that he came of an old Pharisaic family and that, as a Nazarene, he was in reality standing for one of the fundamental positions of Pharisaism, namely, the resurrection of the dead (v. 6).

The chiliarch found that he could get very little light on the case from the sanhedrin (10)!

"Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people" (v. 5). Reverence for regularly constituted authority, so uncommon in our day and nation, is an essential element in Christian character.

Study XVII.—After Two Years of Suspense in Prison Paul Appeals to the Emperor. 22:23—25:12

Second Day: Jesus Encourages His Witness, and a Conspiracy Against the Testimony Is Defeated. 23:11-24

In a vision during a sleepless night, or perhaps in a dream, Jesus drew near to Paul and assured him that he should yet testify in the capital of the Gentile world. Read v. 11; cf. 18:9; 22:18-21.

When Paul's bitter enemies saw that there would be at least no speedy conviction of him by the sanhedrin, forty desperate men vowed that they would neither eat nor drink until they had assassinated him. They did not shrink from planning an attack upon Roman soldiers. The brutal and degraded character of the sanhedrin leaders in these degenerate days is evident from the fact that these assassins boldly counted on their coöperation. Read vv. 12-15.

The defeat of this conspiracy was accomplished in a very simple but extremely interesting way, and the account of it is presented in Luke's most engaging style. Read vv. 16-24.

Many questions arise in this connection. Was Paul's brother-in-law a member of the sanhedrin, and therefore cognizant of the plot? Or was this sister a widow? Did she perhaps not live in Jerusalem at all, but rather in Tarsus, and had this young man been sent to Jerusalem to be trained by the rabbis in the hope that he would make good his uncle Saul's grievous failure to maintain the Pharisaic fame of the aristocratic family? Was this young man, therefore, a student who had the privilege of attending the sessions of the sanhedrin, and in this way became cognizant of the conspiracy?

Jesus' personal interest in the success of the testimony comes clearly out in v. 11. He was and is the Invisible Superintendent of this great campaign of testimony. His personal consideration for His witnesses is also evident. He does not simply use them as tools. "No longer do I call you servants. . . . I have called you friends" (John 15:15). He knew that Paul was being bitterly disappointed over the outcome of his long anticipated visit to Jerusalem and sorely needed comfort. So He came to him with words of cheer and promise of further achievement. Read v. 11.

Study XVII.—After Two Years of Suspense in Prison Paul Appeals to the Emperor. 22:23—25:12

Third Day: Paul Delivered to the Procurator Felix. 23:23-35

Read 23:23-24, 31. What thoughts were probably in Paul's mind during the night ride with the clatter of horses' hoofs and the rattle of spears against shields sounding in his ears?

Read 23:26-30. Is the representation of the chiliarch accurate?

Read vv. 31-35. The procurator Felix was a man perhaps now in middle life. He had been a slave, but he and his abler brother had known how to make their way in a court in which deftness in committing crime and helping prominent personages to gratify lust were prime requisites for success. The two young men had succeeded so well that both had gained their freedom. The brother, Pallas, had become the favorite of an emperor, and Felix had received an important procuratorship in the East. He had been a forceful administrator and had been particularly vigorous in the suppression of brigands and revolutionists (cf. 24:2). He had been speedily fascinated by one of the beautiful girls of the Herodian family, who had married a native prince. He hired a magician to do for him a piece of disreputable work, the like of which he had himself probably often done in his younger days, namely, induce her to abandon her husband and marry him. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:7:2.)

It was this man to whom Paul was delivered and who immediately asked him the formal question (v. 34) customary in such cases. "Herod's Prætorium" (v. 35) was the official residence of the procurator, and probably contained a prison and quarters for soldiers.

When had Paul been in Cæsarea last? What friends had he there?

Paul's many years of active missionary life are now succeeded by the quiet routine of prison life. Perhaps the thought of Paul, the prisoner, did as much to inspire and steady the Christians throughout the western world as he in his freedom could have done. It is not always the most "active" life that is the most useful.

Study XVII.—After Two Years of Suspense in Prison Paul Appeals to the Emperor. 22:23—25:12

Fourth Day: Paul's Hearing Before the Procurator Felix. 24:1-23

Luke possessed great skill in making summary reports of public addresses. Although these reports are brief, they seem to retain the characteristic features of their originals. We have already had occasion to see this in the different types of address found in chapters 2, 13, 17. Read 24:1-9, noting the professional swing with which the rather unctuous lawyer, hired for the occasion, states his case.

Is it probable that Luke was present? We have seen that Luke reached Jerusalem with Paul ("us," 21:18), and we know that later he sailed for Rome with Paul ("we," 27:1).

Note carefully the four charges made by the lawyer, the first very general, the other three more specific. The charge that Paul was an "insurrectionist" might have been thought particularly likely to enlist Felix against him, for the procurator seems to have been specially active against such (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:8:5). As soon as the lawyer had made his statement the high priest, who was present in person, surrounded by an imposing group of sanhedrin dignitaries, vigorously corroborated the lawyer's indictment (v. 9). They do not intend to let Paul escape them this time. What measure of truth was there in any of the charges?

The procurator indicated to Paul by a nod ("beckoned," v. 10) that he might begin his defense.

"And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered" (v. 10). The procurator seemed to himself and to the public of his day to be a far more important personage than the Jewish prisoner whose case he was hearing with such nonchalance. But the Roman's name would not have lived among men, except for its association with that of an apostle of Jesus Christ. The significant and memorable fact about any person is his relation to Jesus Christ.

Study XVII.—After Two Years of Suspense in Prison Paul Appeals to the Emperor. 22:23—25:12

Fifth Day: Paul's Hearing Before the Procurator Felix (*Concluded*). 24:1-23

Read vv. 10-21, noting Paul's answer to each of the charges preferred by the lawyer (vv. 5-6). Why specify the time (v. 11)?

Paul knew from previous experience (e. g., before Gallio, 18:13, 15) the necessity of showing that the "sect of the Nazarenes" were in such vital accord with the Jewish religion as to be entitled to the protection afforded to the Jewish religion by Roman law. Christianity was not an unlicensed religion. Read vv. 14-15.

In addition to Paul's flat denial of the charges made against him he called attention to two fundamental weaknesses in the prosecution. First, the prosecution had no real witnesses. The Asiatic Jews, to whom allusion had doubtless been made, were suspiciously absent (vv. 13, 19). The second weakness in the prosecution, the statement of which constituted Paul's climax, was the fact that he had appeared before the supreme court of his nation and that body had preferred no charges against him! The president of that court, the high priest himself, was now before Felix and must make this damaging admission! Read vv. 20-21.

Paul also lays great stress on the fact that the vital point in the Nazarene preaching is the resurrection of Jesus. Perhaps he hoped by making this clear again to divide his accusers as he had previously divided the sanhedrin. But probably the Sadducean high priest had taken pains to see that no Pharisees were members of the present delegation. Or if there were Pharisees present, their hatred of Paul was sufficiently bitter to keep them quiet.

Felix, who perhaps through his Jewish wife or through some of his military associates in Cæsarea (cf. 10:1, 24, 44), had favorable information about the Nazarenes, sent the sanhedrin leaders and their lawyer away disappointed. Read vv. 22-23.

"I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men alway" (v. 16). Paul had a strong sense of the judgment day and of accountability to God. One ought frequently to ask himself,—Are my conduct and feeling toward every man such as could be frankly described and confidently justified before my Lord in His judgment?

Study XVII.—After Two Years of Suspense in Prison Paul Appeals to the Emperor. 22:23—25:12

Sixth Day: The Testimony Before Felix, the Procurator. 24:24-27

Read vv. 24-27. Both the procurator and Drusilla, his Jewish wife, were evidently interested in the Nazarene movement. Drusilla's father was the Herod who beheaded James, imprisoned Peter, and soon after died a horrible death which the Nazarenes regarded as inflicted by God. He had been a sort of Pharisee himself in his later life (12:1-3, 23). As was suggested yesterday, the Nazarene movement in Cæsarea may have entered official circles. The procurator and his wife soon invited Paul to a personal interview. Note, in v. 24, the exact subject of which Paul spoke to them. The truth that he presented evidently was that Jesus Christ will judge men (cf. 17:31), and that to prepare for His judgment one must accept Him as Lord, and live a life of righteousness and chaste self-control. This Felix had not done. Dark memories of bloody deeds during his slave-life in Rome and of his unchaste passion for the woman at his side stirred his conscience and forced him to an awkward and embarrassed termination of the interview. Read v. 25. The experience of Felix on this occasion was, however, a mere spasm of remorse and dread, a psychologically ominous prophecy of his future rather than a disposition to repent.

Read v. 26. On what subjects do you suppose Paul and Felix, both of whom in different ways had seen so much of the world, used to talk? Where did Felix suppose that Paul could get money for the bribe? Analyze the character of Felix.

These were days of critical importance in the career of the procurator. After many years of evil living, a door opened before him into life and purity. A man living in hourly fellowship with the Son of God was providentially brought into close relationship with him. He failed, however, to act decisively upon the impressions of which he was conscious in his best moments, and so failed to pass through the open door.

Study XVII.—After Two Years of Suspense in Prison Paul Appeals to the Emperor. 22:23—25:12

Seventh Day: Paul Is Forced to Appeal to Cæsar. 25:1-12

Read 25:1-12. Festus, who seems to have been a better man than Felix, went up immediately from the city of his official residence to the Jewish capital, probably to inspect the forces stationed there and to acquaint himself with the situation in this center of turbulence. The Jewish leaders, still hating Paul as bitterly as ever, hope that Festus will be so desirous of their good-will at the beginning of his administration as to grant them a favor. The date of the beginning of Festus' procuratorship is generally thought to have been about the year 60 or 61, and to be one of the fixed dates in the chronology of Paul's life, but even this date is not unquestioned, and the earlier date, 55 or 56, is sometimes advocated.

Picture in imagination the scene described in v. 7, the excited accusers crowding about the prisoner before the judgment seat and vociferating against him.

State the principal items charged, as suggested by Paul's defense.

What does Festus' proposal (v. 9) indicate as to his opinion regarding Paul's alleged plotting against Cæsar?

What did Festus suppose would be the probable outcome of this trial in Jerusalem? What was Paul's opinion as to its probable outcome?

Just what emergency necessitated the appeal to Cæsar?

Every Roman citizen seems to have had the right, except in certain cases, to appeal from an inferior jurisdiction to that of the emperor himself. Festus ascertained, after a moment's consultation with his council, that Paul's case was not an exception (v. 12).

These two years in Cæsarea must have given Luke large opportunity to consult original sources for the composition of his Gospel and the Book of Acts.

Through imprisonments, false accusations, and unjust magistrates, God's purpose that Paul should witness in Rome was steadily being carried out. It is a great gain when we learn that an apparently disadvantageous situation can be made to contribute directly to usefulness.

A. D. 60 (Zahn); A. D. 55-56 (Harnack).

Study XVIII.—A Last Famous Testimony in Cæsarea and a Perilous Voyage to Rome. 25:13—28:16

First Day: The Famous Testimony Before King and Court. 25:13—26:32

The prolonged suspense of an imprisonment which seemed likely to end any day, and yet dragged on for two years, must have been very hard for a man of Paul's strenuous temperament to bear. Yet it afforded him an opportunity for a series of testimonies before high officials whom he might not otherwise have met. The most splendid of these occasions so far was the one we are now to study, and the testimony, already given twice, is now repeated with appropriate literary elegance.

To-day read 25:13-23. The young king, Herod Agrippa II, with his sister Bernice, had come to Cæsarea from his little kingdom in the interior, to pay their respects to the new procurator, Festus, the successor of their brother-in-law, Felix. The relations between Bernice and her sister Drusilla had been somewhat strained (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:7:2), and Bernice had probably felt no very great sorrow when her sister's husband had been recalled to Rome. Agrippa had lived a good deal in Rome and was probably glad to visit with someone fresh from the gossip and intrigue of Roman court circles. The palace where Festus entertained them had been the old home of Agrippa and his sister, the place where their father had met his horrible death (12:19, 23).

What help did Festus hope to receive from Agrippa?

The occasion described in v. 23 was a full-dress assembly at which the military officers from the garrison, the principal civil officers from the city, the procurator, the young king and his sister, with their retinue, were present. Before this assembly Paul, the imprisoned rabbi, was brought in chained.

"To-morrow, saith he, thou shalt hear him" (v. 22). Agrippa was unconsciously drawing near the supreme moment of opportunity in his long career. That eventful morrow dawned as had many days before, and as did many days afterward. But on that eventful day he was to hear the testimony of a man who had seen Jesus in His glory, and was to be made the object of a direct appeal. May no great opportunity pass us unrecognized and unused!

Study XVIII.—A Last Famous Testimony in Cæsarea and a Perilous Voyage to Rome. 25:13—28:16

Second Day: The Famous Testimony Before King and Court (*Continued*). 25:13—26:32

Read 25:23-27. Luke takes special pains to bring out the fact that the Roman official recognized in this great Christian leader nothing contrary to Roman law. This fact would be serviceable to the Christians in any time of persecution by the Roman government. Luke may have realized this, even though there may have been no such persecution at the time when the book was written.

Paul, who had so little opportunity to preach to anyone in these days, and who never before had such an audience to address, rejoiced in his opportunity. He was particularly glad to speak before the young king, who, like himself, was both a Jew and a Roman citizen, and able to understand the religious aspects of the case while viewing them from the cosmopolitan Roman standpoint. Read 26:1-3.

What is the main point in vv. 4-11?

What three circumstances in vv. 4-5 show how close to the heart of Judaism Paul's pre-Christian life had been lived? That which God had promised (v. 6) was the Messiah and His Kingdom. Notice the eloquent irony in vv. 6-7. The "vote" (v. 10) may not have been cast as a member of the sanhedrin.

Read vv. 12-15. There is indication in v. 14 that Paul had been experiencing an inner struggle. It is not probable that he was resisting the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah (v. 9). It was rather an unrest, due to his discovery that he was not keeping the law. Rom. 7:7-8 is probably a bit of spiritual autobiography referring to the period.

"Thou art permitted to speak for thyself" (26:1). In a sense more profound than the young king realized, every man has a message born of his own experience. No one but himself can ever utter it. It is his message springing out of his experience. It will come from him with a divine force which the report of no mere observer can have.

Study XVIII.—A Last Famous Testimony in Cæsarea and a Perilous Voyage to Rome. 25:13—28:16

Third Day: The Famous Testimony Before King and Court (*Concluded*). 25:13—26:32

It was not with the bare hope of "saving his soul," but with the vision of a career, that Jesus appealed to Paul. In what was the career to consist, according to vv. 16-18?

Read vv. 19-23, which describe Paul's experience in this career up to the moment of speaking. What are the most important thoughts in v. 22? Who are the "great"?

The statement in v. 23 was too much for the procurator, and he broke out in protest. The idea of a resurrection was queer enough, but that Paul should speak of this crucified Jew as a living source of light to Romans was too gross an absurdity to pass unnoticed. The only charitable supposition was that the rabbi's close application to his sacred books (v. 22) had produced mental derangement (v. 24)! Paul took advantage of the interruption to close in personally upon his audience. The young king's father had been, ostensibly at least, a Pharisee. The young man himself must be acquainted with the Hebrew prophets and had been about Jerusalem enough to be well acquainted with the Nazarene movement and the Nazarene exegesis of the prophets. Paul, therefore, appealed directly to him to tell whether he had not made his case. But the king had no mind, after the procurator's outbreak, to enter into the discussion, and put Paul off with the sportive remark, that he seemed to think that he could even make a Nazarene of him with a little persuasion! Read vv. 25-29.

It is impossible to tell how profoundly moved some of the elegant company may have been as they passed out of the audience-room. Perhaps some of the military men present were already Nazarenes (chap. 10) and had listened to the testimony with prayerful hearts.

Note the point Luke emphasizes in vv. 31-32.

"A witness both of things wherein thou hast seen me and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee" (v. 16). It is not merely a past experience, but also a present deepening experience with Jesus Christ, that is to constitute the basis of our message.

Study XVIII.—A Last Famous Testimony in Cæsarea and a Perilous Voyage to Rome. 25:13—28:16

Fourth Day: The Voyage Begins. 27:1-13

Read 27:1-13, using a map.

Note the evidence in v. 1 that Luke accompanies Paul. Some of the "other prisoners" (v. 1) may have been those condemned to death in the Roman arena. Aristarchus had come up to Jerusalem with Paul (20:4).

How do you account for the kindness of the centurion (v. 3) here and later (v. 43)? This Alexandrian vessel (v. 6) was an Egyptian grain ship (v. 38).

Read the account of the council (vv. 9-12), using the map. The adverse winds (v. 7) had so delayed them that it was past the season of safe navigation. The "fast," or Jewish day of atonement, occurred about the time of the autumnal equinox. Who presided over the council? Is there evidence that more than four persons consulted? Note that Paul appears here in consultation as a gentleman of distinction whose opinion as an extensive traveler (cf. 2 Cor. 11:25-26) is sought. The "owner" may have been merely the sailing master, if this were one of the government fleet of grain ships. In that case, the other person mentioned might have been the pilot.

It becomes more and more evident that the plan of God is closely interlaced with all the plans of men. The plans of grain merchants, procurators, centurions, and sailors, all enter into the comprehensive plan of God. God is in His world, and the lives of men constitute the pre-eminent feature of the "world."

A. D. 60 (Zahn); A. D. 56-57 (55-56) (Harnack).

Study XVIII.—A Last Famous Testimony in Cæsarea and a Perilous Voyage to Rome. 25:13—28:16

Fifth Day: The Terrible Storm. 27:14-44

Read the account of the beginning of the storm (vv. 13-17). The Euraquilo was a northeast wind. The gale was so violent that they could simply run before the wind (v. 15), to the partial protection of the little island (see map), where they were able to take on board a small skiff they had in tow (v. 16), and slip cables around the hull of the vessel to strengthen it against the strain of the storm (v. 17a). Then fearing that they would be drifted into the African shoals (see map, and note the direction of the wind), they reduced sail and headed the ship in a direction that resulted in their reaching Malta, 476 miles away, fourteen days later.

Read carefully vv. 18-37, letting your imagination produce for you the scenes described.

The cargo that was thrown out (v. 18) did not include the grain in the hold (v. 38). In v. 19 some manuscripts read "we," instead of "they," in which case Luke himself probably helped to throw overboard some of the heavier and less essential parts of the ship's equipment.

Is there any hint in vv. 21-26 that Paul had prayed in this perilous time, and for whom he had prayed?

"Driven on through the sea," rather than "to and fro in the sea" (v. 27). The Adria is not the modern Adriatic, but the central Mediterranean.

What characteristics of Paul are revealed by his conduct on this perilous voyage? Some of them contributed largely to the success of his life-work.

"God, whose I am" (v. 23). In the roar of the storm and the angry presence of death Paul's triumphant confidence was the simple fact that he belonged to God. When you find yourself threatened by any dreaded situation, stop and regain poise by remembering whose you are, and that no real harm can come to one who belongs to God.

Study XVIII.—A Last Famous Testimony in Cæsarea and a Perilous Voyage to Rome. 25:13—28:16

Sixth Day: The Terrible Storm (*Concluded*). 27:14-44

Read vv. 39-44, noting each phrase carefully.

This part of the island (v. 39) was not near the principal harbor with which sailors might have been expected to be familiar. The rudders had been lifted out of the water to protect them from the beating of the waves, and are now let down into the water, so that the ship may be steered straight to the beach (v. 40). This place (v. 41) is thought to have been a channel between a little island and the main island, connecting "two seas." A soldier forfeited his own life if his prisoner escaped (v. 42; cf. 16:27).

Read 28:1-10 with careful attention to each phrase. Picture to yourself the 276 from the ship, the natives of the island, the cold driving rain, the smoking fire, the sea and the wreck.

This island was apparently the one now called Malta. The inhabitants are called "barbarians" (v. 2) by the Greek author, not in contempt, but because it was the common designation of people that did not speak Greek. They were Phœnician-speaking Carthaginians.

Who were probably included in the "us" to whom entertainment was given by the magistrate (v. 7)? Does the word "us" (v. 10) indicate that Luke had given medical service to the people?

Paul was a useful man in every situation. If there be but one willing man of God in a situation, since God Himself is there, whatever can be done by God through a willing man will be done.

Study XVIII.—A Last Famous Testimony in Cæsarea and a Perilous Voyage to Rome. 25:13—28:16

Seventh Day: The Arrival in Rome. 28:11-16

Read 28:11-16, using the map.

This vessel (v. 11) had probably reached the island before the storm. Its figure-head was Castor and Pollux. The fact that there were Christians in Puteoli (v. 14) shows how a church could form itself in a great business center like Rome, as it were by chance. Perhaps the centurion had reason for delaying in Puteoli, or else he showed special favor to Paul (v. 14). Word was sent from Puteoli to Rome, and two delegations of Roman Christians came out some thirty and forty miles on the Appian Road to meet Paul (v. 15). Why did he thank God? And why had he been discouraged or apprehensive (v. 15)? Perhaps he thanked God in some audible ejaculation that Luke noticed, or in specially fervent prayer with the newly arrived brethren.

Glance over Rom. 16 for the names of some who may have met him. Imagine the meeting!

In what ways were the hardships of this voyage advantageous to the general work of Paul? Particularly consider the influence of Paul, during the voyage and the winter in the island, upon the centurion and upon all the ship's company; the report of Paul carried by the centurion to his fellow-officers in Rome, and by the soldiers to their fellow-soldiers in the Roman barracks.

"Whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage" (v. 15). Do you adequately appreciate your fellow Christians? And are you such a Christian friend as to make your fellow Christians take courage at sight of you?

A. D. 61 (Zahn); A. D. 57 (56) (Harnack).

Study XIX.—The Testimony Finally Established in the Capital of the Gentile World. 28:16-31

First Day: Paul, as Usual, Meets the Leaders of the Ghetto. 28:16-22

Read vv. 16-22. Perhaps through the influence of his friend, the centurion Julius, Paul had considerable liberty (v. 16). Paul evidently had money at his disposal with which to meet the expense of such an arrangement and later to pay the rent of "his own hired dwelling" for two years (v. 30). This may have come to him through reconciliation with his family or through the generosity of the churches.

Paul as usual turned first to his own countrymen. Note the points that he was concerned to make clear in his first interview with them. They had heard of the Nazarene sect, but knew nothing about it in detail. They were prejudiced against it, but were willing to hear what a distinguished Jerusalem rabbi, evidently enjoying the favor of the Roman authorities, might have to say about it. Why had the high priest not sent word to them from Jerusalem about Paul's appeal to Cæsar? They seem to have had no connection with the Christians in Rome probably because, according to Paul's Letter to the Romans, most of the Christians were Gentiles. Furthermore, these Christians were scattered over the city, meeting in groups in private houses. (Rom. 16:5, 14.)

"Because of the hope . . . I am bound" (v. 20). It is a strange fact that the men who have hoped great things for humanity have often suffered because of their hope. They have often been unpopular, and have sometimes lost their lives as martyrs. The Liberator of Humanity, with His great hope of the Kingdom, died on a cross. Why is it?

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Second Day: Paul Turns to the Gentiles. 28:23-31

With his usual literary skill, at the end of his volume Luke dramatically represents Paul turning from Jew to Gentile. Read vv. 23-28. Paul's last word to them is a word of doom, impressively spoken in the ominous language of one of their own great prophets (vv. 25-27). But the Gentile world is receptive (v. 28)! The last utterance ascribed to Paul by the author is a declaration that the gospel has passed from Jew to Gentile. The testimony began in Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish world, as a Jewish possession. It has passed to Rome, the capital of the Gentile world, and has become a Gentile possession.

What expression in v. 23 carries you back to Luke's general conception in 1:8?

The testimony is thoroughly established in Rome through two years of residence. Read vv. 30-31. The readiness of the Gentiles to hear (v. 28) is evident from the fact that they allowed Paul to preach boldly and without fear of interference (v. 31). This was in striking contrast to the treatment usually accorded him by Jews.

While the author has brought to completion his account of one great epoch, his narrative ends leaving certain great questions crying out for answer. What was the outcome of Paul's appeal to Cæsar? What was the effect of his two years of preaching in the city, and what were some of its many interesting incidents? Perhaps the author planned to answer these questions in a third volume. His first volume ends in a similar way, bringing one narrative to completion and preparing the way for another. Cf. Luke 24:44-53.

"Preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 31). We are appointed to keep before men by conduct and word the ethical ideals involved in the phrase, "Kingdom of God," and personal connection with Jesus Christ the Lord as the means of increasingly realizing these ideals.

Study XIX.—The Testimony Finally Established in the Capital of the Gentile World. 28:16-31

Third Day: The Letters of the Roman Imprisonment. 28:30-31

We are not left entirely without further suggestions regarding Paul's life during the two years in Rome. Four letters seem to have been written within this period, namely, those to Philemon, to the Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians. It is possible that the first three of these were written during Paul's two years of confinement in Cæsarea (24:27), but they are generally assigned to the Roman imprisonment. Their contribution to Paul's biography during this period may be quickly gleaned.

To-day read rapidly the short letter to Philemon. Make up your mind what it is about and what contribution it makes to your knowledge of Paul during these two years. He is evidently looking forward to release (v. 22).

"A prisoner of Christ Jesus" (v. 1). Jesus Christ can accomplish a great deal through a life lived under serious limitations, if only that life be given without reserve to Him. Paul's prison experience gave birth to some of the letters that have most strongly influenced the life and thought of the world. Beautiful thoughts about Jesus Christ, His power and His glory, shaped themselves with new clearness during these prison years, and are increasingly enriching the life of a world then undiscovered.

A. D. 61-63 (Zahn); A. D. 57-59 (56-58) (Harnack).

Study XIX.—The Testimony Finally Established in the Capital of the Gentile World. 28:16-31

Fourth Day: The Letters of the Roman Imprisonment (*Continued*). 28:30-31

Note more closely certain biographical points in the Letter to Philemon. Philemon was a gentleman residing in Colosse, a city of the province of Asia, as is evident from vv. 2, 11 compared with Col. 4:9, 17. He had been converted by Paul (v. 19) perhaps when visiting Ephesus, for Paul seems never to have visited Colosse (Col. 2:1). He was a well-to-do man, for he had a church in his house (v. 2). It may be his wife and son who are mentioned in v. 2. If this be so, his son was engaged in some sort of church work (Col. 4:17).

Philemon's slave, Onesimus, had run away, or when sent away on business had kept and squandered his master's money and failed to return home (vv. 11, 15, 18, 19). He had been converted in Rome by Paul and his associates (v. 10), and had proven himself useful in the city mission work they were carrying on (vv. 11, 13). But although Paul could have used him he sent him back to his master with this note, in company with (under the charge of?) Tychicus (Col. 4:7-9). Vv. 11-19 and Col. 4:7-9 are worded with such tenderness and tact as to secure for the runaway a cordial reception by both master and church. He is Paul's "very heart" (v. 12), trusted by him (vv. 11, 13), to be received as Paul himself would be (v. 17). Philemon will find him truly helpful in the future ("Onesimus" means helpful) (vv. 11, 15)! God's providence has been in the incident (vv. 15-16). The actual money loss Paul will make good, if Philemon sees fit to require it (vv. 18-19)!

A most interesting group are with Paul (v. 24; cf. Acts 20:4-5).

"I thank my God always" (v. 4). Paul's first thought in every situation was of its advantageous features. He had cultivated the appreciative habit.

A. D. 61-63 (Zahn); A. D. 57-59 (56-58) (Harnack).

Study XIX.—The Testimony Finally Established in the Capital of the Gentile World. 28:16-31

Fifth Day: The Letters of the Roman Imprisonment (*Continued*). 28:30-31

With Paul's brief letter to Philemon of Colosse he sent also a longer one to all the Christians in Colosse (Col. 4:7-9). The church in Colosse was probably founded not by Paul (2:1), but by a man named Epaphras (1:6-7). This man Epaphras now visits Paul in Rome, as a representative not only of the church in Colosse, but also of the neighboring churches in Hierapolis and Laodicea (Col. 4:12-13).

At the time of writing, Paul had in his company a number of Christian Jews whose names are given in Col. 4:10-11, and who were helping him in the missionary work of which his "hired house" was the center. In Col. 4:12-14 appear the names also of certain Gentile helpers. Chief among all his helpers was the young man whose name stands with that of Paul at the beginning of the letter (Col. 1:1).

A medley of strange views, partly Jewish in their origin and combined also probably with local superstitions, were being introduced into the church. The advocates of these views had much to say of certain lordly angelic beings called "thrones," "dominions," "principalities," "powers" (1:16), among whom they were probably willing to assign Jesus Christ a place. Those who wished special enlightenment, superior to that available for those who simply had faith in Jesus Christ, were being told that they must seek it through intercourse with these angelic beings in visions (2:18-19). Paul asserts in his letter that Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God, is superior to these lordly angels. Indeed, Jesus Christ gave them their being (1:15-17). The humblest believer has immediate access to Jesus Himself, and finds in intercourse with Jesus the highest experiences that any man is capable of having (1:27-28; 2:6-13; 3:1-4).

"Set your mind on the things that are above" (3:2). "What gets your attention gets you."

A. D. 61-63 (Zahn); A. D. 57-59 (56-58) (Harnack).

STUDY XIX.—The Testimony Finally Established in the Capital of the Gentile World. 28:16-31

SIXTH DAY: THE LETTERS OF THE ROMAN IMPRISONMENT (*Continued*)

Very much like the Letter to the Christians in Colosse is that to the Christians in Ephesus. Some of the oldest manuscripts omit the words translated "at Ephesus" (1:1), which fact has given rise to the theory that the letter was originally a circular-letter intended for several of the churches in the province of Asia, and that possibly it is the one referred to in Col. 4:16 as being in possession of the church in Laodicea. The letter ultimately received the name of the most prominent church in the circle to which it was sent. Paul was still a prisoner when he wrote it (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). The fact that Tychicus who carried the Letter to the Colossians (Col. 4:7) also carried this one (Eph. 6:21) makes it seem probable that all three letters—Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians—were sent at the same time.

It assumes the supreme exaltation of Jesus Christ, as does Colossians (Eph. 1:20-23), and the direct connection of every believer with the person of his Lord (3:17), but lays peculiar emphasis on the close relation which exists between all believers by virtue of their common relation to the exalted Christ. (2:11-16; 4:1-6.)

"Speaking truth in love" (4:15). Honesty and sympathy are the foundation virtues in Paul's conception of character. To deal sincerely and kindly with every man is the triumph of character, caught by the contagion of daily association with Jesus Christ.

A. D. 61-63 (Zahn); A. D. 57-59 (56-58) (Harnack).

Study XIX.—The Testimony Finally Established in the Capital of the Gentile World. 28:16-31

Seventh Day: The Letters of the Roman Imprisonment (*Concluded*)

Paul's letter to the Christians in Philippi is rich in biographical allusions. Only the most salient of them can be noted.

It was written near a crisis in his imprisonment (2:23) when he was expecting either execution or release (1:20-21; 2:17). On the whole he is expecting release (1:24-25; 2:24). He has now only one really trusty helper with him. Of the rest he speaks quite critically (2:19-22).

Paul is in communication with Christians in Rome, among whom are now found some of the Emperor's household (4:22).

Unfortunately there are in the city certain Jewish Christians who are not in sympathy with Paul and would gladly make Paul's situation harder to bear (1:15-17). Paul has gained great influence over the court (1:12-13), and, perhaps through the constantly changing guard stationed in his house, among the soldiers also.

The letter acknowledges a gift of money sent by the Christians in Philippi (4:10, 18), perhaps especially needed for house rent (Acts 28:30), or for expenses connected with the crisis in his trial (2:23). A man from Philippi who brought the gift probably carries back the letter. This messenger has been sick and homesick, and Paul seems to feel that the church may criticise the man for failing to remain in Rome to help him (2:25-30).

"The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel" (1:12). Paul had thoroughly committed himself, all that he owned and all whom he could influence, to the publication of the gospel throughout the empire. It was not strange that every circumstance in his changeful career was made to serve his master passion. In the twentieth century the Lord still calls for men whose master passion it shall be to introduce into every department of life the ethical ideals of Jesus Christ, and who will bring to all men the glad word of the gospel, that this master passion can be kept strong and efficient by association with the personality of the living Lord, Jesus Christ.

A. D. 61-63 (Zahn); A. D. 57-59 (56-58) (Harnack).

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